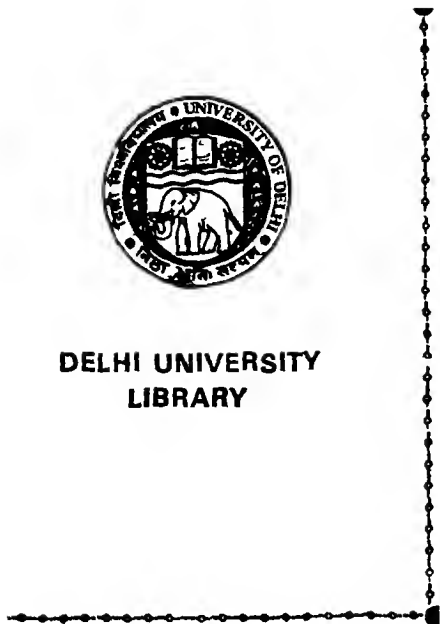




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# Literature of Italy 1265-1907.

Edited by Rossiter Johnson and  
Dora Knowlton Ranous

With a General Introduction by William  
Michael Rossetti and Special Intro-  
ductions by James, Cardinal Gibbons,  
Charles Eliot Norton, S. G. W. Ben-  
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Wordsworth, Sir Thomas Wyatt





*PORTRAIT OF LAURA*  
*from a Painting by Jules Lefebvre*



# THE NEW LIFE

(*LA VITA NUOVA*)

BY

DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

---

ONE HUNDRED SONNETS

BY FRANCESCO PETRARCH

---

LA FIAMMETTA

BY GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

---

POEMS

BY MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

THE NATIONAL ALUMNI

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## INTRODUCTION

**N**O poet has recorded his own inner life more fully or with greater sincerity than Dante. All his more important writings have essentially the character of a spiritual autobiography, extending from his boyhood to his latest years. Their quality and worth as works of literature are largely dependent upon their quality and interest as revelations of the nature of their writer; and their main significance lies in this double character

The earliest of them is the *Vita Nuova* or "New Life." It is the narrative in prose and verse of the beginning and course of the love that made life new for him in his youth and became the permanent inspiration of his later years, and the bond of union for him between earth and heaven, between the actual and the ideal, between the human and the divine. The little book begins with an account of the boy's first meeting, when he was nine years old, with a little maiden about a year younger, who so touched his heart that from that time Love lorded it over his soul. She was called Beatrice; but whether this was her true name, or whether, because of its significance of blessing, it was assigned to her as appropriate to her nature, is left in doubt. Who her parents were, and what were the events of her life, are also uncertain; though Boccaccio, who, thirty years after Dante's death, wrote a biography of the poet in which

fact and fancy are inextricably intermingled, reports that he had it upon good authority that she was the daughter of Folco Portinari, and became the wife of Simone de' Bardi. So far as Dante's relation to her is concerned, these matters are of no moment. Just nine years after their first meeting, years during which Dante says he had often seen her, and her image had stayed constantly with him, the lady of his love saluted him with such virtue that he seemed to see all the bounds of bliss; and having already recognized in himself the art of discoursing in rhyme, he made a sonnet in which he set forth a vision that had come to him after receiving his lady's salute. This sonnet has a twofold interest, as being the earliest of Dante's poetic composition preserved to us, and as describing a vision that connects it in motive with the vision of the *Divine Comedy*. It is the poem of a 'prentice hand and neither in manner nor in conception has it any marked distinction from the work of his predecessors and contemporaries.

The narrative of the first incidents of his love forms the subject of the first part of the little book, consisting of ten poems and the prose comment upon them; then the poet takes up a new theme and devotes ten poems to the praise of his lady. The last of them is interrupted by her death, which took place on the ninth of June, 1290, when Dante was twenty-five years old. Then he takes up another new theme, and the next ten poems are devoted to his grief, to an episode of temporary unfaithfulness to the memory of Beatrice, and to the revival of fidelity of love for her. One poem, the last, remains;

in which he tells how a sigh, issuing from his heart and guided by Love, beholds his lady in glory in the empyrean. The book closes with these words: "After this sonnet a wonderful vision appeared to me, in which I saw things that made me resolve to speak no more of this blessed one until I could more worthily treat of her. And to attain to this, I study to the utmost of my power, as she truly knows. So that, if it shall please Him through whom all things live that my life be prolonged for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman. And then may it please Him who is the Lord of Grace that my soul may go to behold the glory of its lady, namely of that blessed Beatrice, who in glory looks upon the face of Him *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus*" (who is blessed forever).

There is nothing in the *New Life* that indicates whether or not Beatrice was married, or implies that the devotion of Dante to her was recognized by any special expression of regard on her part. No interviews between them are recorded; no tokens of love were exchanged. The reserve, the simple and unconscious dignity of Beatrice, distinguish her no less than her beauty, her grace, and her ineffable courtesy. The story, based upon actual experience, is ordered not in literal conformity with fact, but according to the ideal of the imagination; and its reality does not consist in the exactness of its record of events, but in the truth of its poetic conception. Under the narrative lies an allegory of the power of love to transfigure earthly things into the likeness of heavenly, and to lift the soul to things spiritual and eternal.

While the little book exhibits many features of a liter-

ature in an early stage of development, and many of the characteristics of a youthful production, it is still the first book of modern times that has such quality as to possess perpetual contemporaneousness. It has become in part archaic, but it does not become antiquated. It is the first book in a modern tongue in which prose begins to have freedom of structure, and ease of control over the resources of the language. It shows a steady progress in Dante's mastery of literary art. The stiffness and lack of rhythmical charm of the poems with which it begins disappear in the later sonnets and *canzoni*, and before its close it exhibits the full development of the sweet new style begun by Dante's predecessor, Guido Guinicelli, of which the secret lay in obedience to the dictates of nature within the heart

The date of its compilation cannot be fixed with precision, but was probably not far from 1295, and the words with which it closes seem to indicate that the design of the *Divine Comedy* had taken shape in Dante's mind.

The deepest interest of the *New Life* is the evidence it affords in regard to Dante's character. The tenderness, sensitiveness, and delicacy of feeling, the depth of passion, the purity of soul which are manifest in it, leave no question as to the controlling qualities of his disposition. These qualities rest upon a foundation of manliness, and are buttressed by strong moral principles. At the very beginning of the book is a sentence that shows he had already gained that self-control which is the prime condition of strength and worth of character. In speaking of the power his imagination gave to Love to rule over him, a power that had its source in the image

of his lady, he adds, "This power was yet of so perfect a quality that it never allowed me to be overruled by Love without the faithful counsel of reason whensoever such counsel was useful to be heard." Dante's faculties were already disciplined by study, and his gifts enriched with learning. He was scholar hardly less than poet. The range of his acquisitions was already wide, and it is plain that he had had the best instruction Florence could provide; and nowhere else could better have been found.

The death of Beatrice was the beginning of a new period of Dante's self-development. So long as she lived she had led him along toward the right way. For a time, during the first ecstasy of grief at her loss, she still sustained him. After a while, he tells us, his mind, which was endeavoring to heal itself, sought for comfort in the mode which other comfortless ones had accepted for their consolation. He read Boethius on the *Consolations of Philosophy*, and the words of comfort in Cicero's *Treatise on Friendship*. By these he was led to further studies of philosophy, and, giving himself with ardor to its pursuit, he devoted himself to the acquisition of the wisdom of this earth, to the neglect, for a time, of the teachings of Divine revelation. He entered upon paths of study that did not lead to the higher truth, and at the same time he began to take active part himself in the affairs of the world. He was attracted by the allurements of life. He married; he took office. He shared in the pleasures of the day. He no longer listened to the voice of the spirit, nor was faithful to the image of Beatrice in following on earth the way that should lead him to her in heaven.

But meanwhile he wrote verses, which under the form of poems of love were celebrations of the beauty of Philosophy; and he was accomplishing himself in learning until he became master of all the erudition of his time; he was meditating deeply on politics, he was studying life even more than books, he was becoming one of the deepest of thinkers and one of the most accomplished of literary artists. But his life was of the world, worldly, and it did not satisfy him. At last a change came. He suddenly awoke to consciousness of how far he had strayed from that good of which Beatrice was the type; how basely he had deserted the true ideals of his youth; how perilous was the life of the world; how near he was to the loss of the hope of salvation. We know not fully how this change was wrought. All we know concerning it is to be gathered from passages in his later works, in which, as in the *Convito*, he explains the allegorical significance of some of his poems, or, as in the *Divine Comedy*, he gives poetic form to his experience as it had shaped itself in his imagination. There are often difficulties in the interpretation of his words, nor are all his statements reconcilable with one another in detail. But I believe that all I have set forth as the course of his life between the death of Beatrice and his exile, may be confirmed by Dante's own testimony.

*Charles Eliot Norton.*

**I**N that part of the book of my memory before the which is little that can be read, there is a rubric, saying, *Incipit Vita Nova*, "Here beginneth the new life." Under such rubric I find written many things; and among them the words which I purpose to copy into this little book; if not the whole of them, at the least their substance.

Nine times since my birth had the heaven of light returned to the selfsame point almost, as concerns its own revolution, when first the glorious Lady of my mind was made manifest to mine eyes; even she who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore.\* She had been in this life for so long that, within her time, the starry heaven had moved toward the Eastern quarter one of the twelve parts of a degree; so that she appeared to me at the beginning of her ninth year almost, and I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year. Her dress, on that day, was of a most noble color, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age. I say most truly that at that moment the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi*, ("Here is a deity stronger than I; who, coming, shall rule over me.") At

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\*In reference to the meaning of the name "She who confers blessing." We learn from Boccaccio that this first meeting took place at a May Feast, given in 1274 by Folco Portinari, father of Beatrice, who ranked among the principal citizens of Florence; to which feast Dante accompanied his father, Alighiero Alighieri.



that moment the animate spirit, which dwelleth in the lofty chamber whither all the senses carry their perceptions, was filled with wonder, and speaking more especially unto the spirits of the eyes, said these words: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra*, ("Your beatitude hath now been made manifest unto you"). At that moment the natural spirit, which dwelleth there where our nourishment is administered, began to weep, and in weeping said these words: *Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero demceps*, ("Woe is me! for that often I shall be disturbed from this time forth!").

I say that, from that time forward, Love quite governed my soul; which was immediately espoused to him, and with so safe and undisputed a lordship (by virtue of strong imagination) that I had nothing left for it but to do all his bidding continually. He often commanded me to seek whether I might see this youngest of the angels; wherefore I in my boyhood often went in search of her, and found her so noble and praiseworthy that certainly of her might have been said those words of the poet Homer: "She seemed not to be the daughter of a mortal man, but of a god." (*Iliad*, xxiv 258) And albeit her image, which was with me always, was an exultation of Love to subdue me, it was yet of so perfect a quality that it never allowed me to be overruled by Love without the faithful counsel of reason, whensoever such counsel was useful to be heard. But seeing that were I to dwell overmuch on the passions and doings of such early youth, my words might be counted something fabulous, I will therefore put them aside, and passing many things that may be conceived by the pattern of these, I will come to such as are writ in my memory with a better distinctness.

After the lapse of so many days that nine years exactly were completed since the above-written appearance of this most gracious being, on the last of those

days it happened that the same wonderful lady appeared to me dressed all in pure white, between two gentle ladies elder than she. And passing through a street, she turned her eyes thither where I stood sorely abashed: and by her unspeakable courtesy, which is now guerdoned in the Great Cycle, she saluted me with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness. The hour of her most sweet salutation was exactly the ninth of that day; and because it was the first time that any words from her reached mine ears, I came into such sweetness that I parted thence as one intoxicated. And betaking me to the loneliness of mine own room, I fell to thinking of this most courteous lady, thinking of whom I was overtaken by a pleasant slumber, wherein a marvelous vision was presented to me: for there appeared to be in my room a mist of the color of fire, within the which I discerned the figure of a lord of terrible aspect to such as should gaze upon him, but who seemed therewithal to rejoice inwardly that it was a marvel to see. Speaking, he said many things, among the which I could understand but few, and of these, this: *Ego dominus tuus* ("I am thy master"). In his arms it seemed to me that a person was sleeping, covered only with a blood-colored cloth, upon whom looking very attentively, I knew that it was the lady of the salutation who had deigned the day before to salute me. And he who held her held also in his hand a thing that was burning in flames; and he said to me, *Uide cor tuum* ("Behold thy heart") But when he had remained with me a little while, I thought that he set himself to awaken her that slept; after the which he made her to eat that thing which flamed in his hand; and she ate as one fearing. Then, having waited again a space, all his joy was turned into most bitter weeping; and as he wept he gathered the lady into his arms, and it seemed to me that he went with her up toward hea-

ven: whereby such a great anguish came upon me that my light slumber could not endure through it, but was suddenly broken. And immediately having considered, I knew that the hour wherein this vision had been made manifest to me was the fourth hour (which is to say, the first of the nine last hours) of the night.

Then, musing on what I had seen, I purposed to relate the same to many poets who were famous in that day: and for that I had myself in some sort the art of discoursing with rhyme, I resolved on making a sonnet, in the which, having saluted all such as are subject unto Love, and entreated them to expound my vision, I should write unto them those things which I had seen in my sleep. And the sonnet I made was this:

To every heart which the sweet pain doth move,  
 And unto which these words may now be brought  
 For true interpretation and kind thought,  
 Be greeting in our Lord's name, which is Love.  
 Of those long hours wherein the stars, above,  
 Wake and keep watch, the third was almost nought,  
 When Love was shown me with such terrors fraught  
 As may not carelessly be spoken of  
 He seemed like one who is full of joy, and had  
 My heart within his hand, and on his arm  
 My lady, with a mantle round her, slept;  
 Whom (having wakened her) anon he made  
 To eat that heart, she ate, as fearing harm  
 Then he went out; and as he went, he wept

*This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first part I give greeting, and ask answer, in the second, I signify what thing has to be answered to. The second part begins here "Of those long hours"*

To this sonnet I received many answers, conveying many different opinions; of the which one was sent by him whom I now call the first among my friends, and it began thus, "Unto my thinking thou beheldest all worth." And, indeed, it was when he learned that I

was he who had sent those rhymes to him, that our friendship began.\* But the true meaning of that vision was not then perceived by any one, though it be now evident to the least skilful.

From that night forth, the natural functions of my body began to be vexed and impeded, for I was given up wholly to thinking of this most gracious creature: whereby in short space I became so weak and so reduced that it was irksome to many of my friends to look upon me; while others, being moved by spite, went about to discover what I wished should be concealed. Wherefore I, perceiving the drift of their unkindly questions, by Love's will, who directed me according to the counsels of reason, told them how it was Love himself who had thus dealt with me; and I said so, because the thing was so plainly to be discerned in my countenance that there was no longer any means of concealing it. But when they went on to ask, "And by whose help hath Love done this?" I looked in their faces smiling, and spake no word in return.

Now it fell on a day, that this most gracious creature was sitting where words were to be heard of the Queen of Glory, and I was in a place whence mine eyes could behold their beatitude. and betwixt her and me, in a direct line, sat another lady of a pleasant favor, who looked round at me many times, marveling at my continued gaze, which seemed to have *her* for its object. And many perceived that she thus looked; so that, departing thence, I heard it whispered after me, "Look you to what a pass *such a lady* hath brought him;" and in saying this they named her who had been midway between the most gentle Beatrice and mine eyes. Therefore I was reassured, and knew that for that day my secret had not become manifest. Then immediately it

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\* The friend of whom Dante here speaks was Guido Cavalcanti.

came into my mind that I might make use of this lady as a screen to the truth: and so well did I play my part that most of those who had hitherto watched and wondered at me, now imagined they had found me out. By her means I kept my secret concealed till some years were gone over; and for my better security, I even made divers rhymes in her honor; whereof I shall here write only as much as concerneth the most gentle Beatrice, which is but a very little. Moreover, about the same time while this lady was a screen for so much love on my part, I took the resolution to set down the name of this most gracious creature, accompanied with many other women's names, and especially with hers of whom I spake. And to this end I put together the names of sixty of the most beautiful ladies in that city where God had placed mine own lady; and these names I introduced in an epistle in the form of a *servente*, which it is not my intention to transcribe here. Neither should I have said anything of this matter, did I not wish to take note of a certain strange thing, to wit: that having written the list, I found my lady's name would not stand otherwise than ninth in order among the names of these ladies.

Now it so chanced with her by whose means I had thus long time concealed my desire, that it behoved her to leave the city I speak of, and to journey afar. Wherefore I, being sorely perplexed at the loss of so excellent a defense, had more trouble than even I could before have supposed. And thinking that if I spoke not somewhat mournfully of her departure, my former counterfeiting would be the more quickly perceived, I determined that I would make a grievous sonnet thereof; the which I will write here, because it had certain words in it whereof my lady was the immediate cause, as will be plain to him that understands. And the sonnet was this:—

All ye that pass along Love's trodden way,  
Pause ye awhile and say  
If there be any grief like unto mine  
I pray you that you hearken a short space  
Patiently, if my case  
Be not a piteous marvel and a sign.

Love (never, certes, for my worthless part,  
But of his own great heart)  
Vouchsafed to me a life so calm and sweet  
That oft I heard folk question as I went  
What such great gladness meant—  
They spoke of it behind me in the street.

But now that fearless bearing is all gone  
Which with Love's hoarded wealth was given to me,  
And I am grown to be  
So poor that I have dread to think thereon  
And thus it is that I, being like as one  
That is ashamed and hides his poverty,  
Without seem full of glee,  
And let my heart within travail and moan

*This poem has two principal parts, for, in the first, I mean to call the Faithful of Love in those words of Jeremas the Prophet, "O vos omnes qui transit sper viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus," and to pray them to stay and hear me. In the second I tell where Love had placed me, with a meaning other than that which the last part of the poem shows, and I say what I have lost. The second part begins here "Love, (never, certes) "*

A certain while after the departure of that lady, it pleased the Master of the Angels to call into His glory a damsel, young and of a gentle presence, who had been very lovely in the city I speak of: and I saw her body lying without its soul among many ladies, who held a pitiful weeping. Whereupon, remembering that I had seen her in the company of excellent Beatrice, I could not hinder myself from a few tears; and weeping, I conceived to say somewhat of her death, in guerdon of

having seen her somewhere with my lady; which thing I spake of in the latter end of the verses that I writ in this matter, as he will discern who understands. And I wrote two sonnets, which are these:

Weep, Lovers, sith Love's very self doth weep,  
 And sith the cause for weeping is so great  
 When no v so many dames, of such estate  
 In worth, show with their eyes a grief so deep;  
 For Death the churl has laid his leaden sleep  
 Upon a damsel who was fair of late,  
 Defacing all our earth should celebrate—  
 Yea, all save virtue, which the soul doth keep.  
 Now hearken how much Love did honor her.  
 I myself saw him in his proper form  
 Bending above the motionless sweet dead,  
 And often gazing into Heaven, for there  
 The soul now sits that when her life was warm  
 Dwelt with the joyful beauty that is fled

*This first sonnet is divided into three parts. In the first, I call and beseech the Faithful of Love to weep, and I say that their Lord weeps, and that they, hearing the reason why he weeps, shall be more minded to listen to me. In the second I relate this reason. In the third, I speak of honor done by Love to this Lady. The second part begins here "When now so many dames," the third here "Now hearken"*

Death, always cruel, Pity's foe in chief,  
 Mother who brought forth grief,  
 Merciless judgment and without appeal!  
 Since thou alone hast made my heart to feel  
 This sadness and unweal,  
 My tongue upbraideth thee without relief

And now (for I must rid thy name of ruth)  
 Behoves me speak the truth  
 Touching thy cruelty and wickedness.  
 Not that they be not known; but ne'ertheless  
 I would give hate more stress  
 With them that feed on love in very sooth.

Out of this world thou hast driven courtesy,  
And virtue, dearly prized in womanhood;  
And out of youth's gay mood  
The lovely lightness is quite gone through thee.  
Whom now I mourn, no man shall learn from me  
Save by the measure of these praises given.  
Whoso deserves not Heaven  
May never hope to have her company.

*This poem is divided into four parts. In the first I address Death by certain proper names of her. In the second, speaking of her, I tell the reason why I am moved to denounce her. In the third, I rail against her. In the fourth, I turn to speak to a person undefined, although defined in my own conception. The second part begins here "Since thou alone," the third here "And now (for I must)", the fourth here "Whoso deserves not"*

Some days after the death of this lady, I had occasion to leave the city I speak of, and to go thither where she abode who had formerly been my protection; albeit the end of my journey reached not altogether so far. And notwithstanding that I was visibly in the company of many, the journey was so irksome that I had scarcely sighing enough to ease my heart's heaviness; seeing that, as I went, I left my beatitude behind me. Wherefore it came to pass that he who ruled me by virtue of my most gentle lady was made visible to my mind in the light habit of a traveler, coarsely fashioned. He appeared to me troubled, and looked always on the ground; saving only that sometimes his eyes were turned toward a river, clear and rapid, that flowed along the path I was taking. And then I thought Love called me and said to me these words: "I come from that lady who was so long thy surety; for the matter of whose return I know that it may not be. Wherefore I have taken that heart which I made thee leave with her, and do bear it unto another lady, who, as she was, shall be thy surety;" (and



when he named her I knew her well). "And of these words I have spoken, if thou shouldst speak any again, let it be in such sort as that none shall perceive thereby that thy love was feigned for her, which thou must now feign for another." And when he had spoken thus, all my imagining was gone suddenly, for it seemed to me that Love became a part of myself: so that, changed as it were in mine aspect, I rode on full of thought the whole of that day, and with heavy sighing. And the day being over, I wrote this sonnet:

A day ago, as I rode sullenly  
Upon a certain path that liked me not,  
I met Love midway while the air was hot,  
Clothed lightly as a wayfarer might be.  
And for the cheer he showed, he seemed to me  
As one who hath lost lordship he had got,  
Advancing tow'rd me full of sorrowful thought,  
Bowing his forehead so that none should see  
Then as I went, he called me by my name,  
Saying: "I journey since the morn was dim  
Thence where I made thy heart to be which now  
I needs must bear unto another dame."  
Wherewith so much passed into me of him  
That he was gone, and I discerned not how.

*This sonnet has three parts. In the first part, I tell how I met Love and of his aspect. In the second, I tell what he said to me, although not in full, through the fear I had of discovering my secret. In the third, I say how he disappeared. The second part begins here: "Then as I went," the third here: "Wherewith so much."*

On my return, I set myself to seek out that lady whom my master had named to me while I journeyed sighing. And because I would be brief, I will now narrate that in a short while I made her my surety, in such sort that the matter was spoken of by many in terms scarcely courteous; through the which I had oftenwhiles many

troublesome hours. And by this it happened (to wit: by this false and evil rumor which seemed to misfame me of vice) that she who was the destroyer of all evil and the queen of all good, coming where I was, denied me her most sweet salutation, in the which alone was my blessedness.

And here it is fitting for me to depart a little from this present matter, that it may be rightly understood of what surpassing virtue her salutation was to me. To the which end I say that when she appeared in any place, it seemed to me, by the hope of her excellent salutation, that no man was mine enemy any longer; and such warmth of charity came upon me that most certainly in that moment I would have pardoned whosoever had done me an injury; and if one should then have questioned me concerning any matter, I could only have said unto him "Love," with a countenance clothed in humbleness. And what time she made ready to salute me, the spirit of Love, destroying all other perceptions, thrust forth the feeble spirits of my eyes, saying, "Do homage unto your mistress," and putting itself in their place to obey: so that he who would, might then have beheld Love, beholding the lids of mine eyes shake. And when this most gentle lady gave her salutation, Love, so far from being a medium beclouding mine intolerable beatitude, then bred in me such an overpowering sweetness that my body, being all subjected thereto, remained many times helpless and passive. Whereby it is made manifest that in her salutation alone was there any beatitude for me, which then very often went beyond my endurance.

And now, resuming my discourse, I will go on to relate that when, for the first time, this beatitude was denied me. I became possessed with such grief that, parting myself from others, I went into a lonely place to bathe the ground with most bitter tears: and when, by this

heat of weeping, I was somewhat relieved, I betook myself to my chamber, where I could lament unheard. And there, having prayed to the Lady of all Mercies, and having said also, "O Love, aid thou thy servant," I went suddenly asleep like a beaten, sobbing child. And in my sleep, toward the middle of it, I seemed to see in the room, seated at my side, a youth in very white raiment, who kept his eyes fixed on me in deep thought. And when he had gazed some time, I thought that he sighed and called to me in these words: "*Fili mi, tempus est ut praetermittantur simulata nostra*" ("My son, it is time for us to lay aside our counterfeiting"). And thereupon I seemed to know him; for the voice was the same wherewith he had spoken at other times in my sleep. Then looking at him, I perceived that he was weeping piteously, and that he seemed to be waiting for me to speak. Wherefore, taking heart, I began thus: "Why weepest thou, Master of all honor?" And he made answer to me "*Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentiae partes tu autem non sic*"\*. And thinking upon his words, they seemed to me obscure, so that again compelling myself unto speech, I asked of him "What thing is this, Master, that thou hast spoken thus darkly?"

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\* "I am as the center of a circle, to the which all parts of the circumference bear an equal relation. but with thee it is not thus." This phrase seems to have remained as obscure to commentators as Dante found it at the moment. No one, as far as I know, has even fairly tried to find a meaning for it. To me the following appears probable. Love is weeping on Dante's account, and not on his own. He says "I am the center of a circle (*Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle*)"; therefore all lovable objects, whether in heaven or earth, or any part of the circle's circumference, are equally near to me. Not so thou, who wilt one day lose Beatrice when she goes to heaven." The phrase would thus contain an intimation of the death of Beatrice, accounting for Dante's being next told not to inquire the meaning of the speech: "Demand no more than may be useful to thee."

To the which he made answer in the vulgar tongue: "Demand no more than may be useful to thee." Whereupon I began to discourse with him concerning her salutation which she had denied me; and when I had questioned him of the cause, he said these words: "Our Beatrice hath heard from certain persons, that the lady whom I named to thee while thou journeyedst full of sighs is sorely disquieted by thy solicitations; and therefore this most gracious creature, who is the enemy of all disquiet, being fearful of such disquiet, refused to salute thee. For the which reason (albeit, in very sooth, thy secret must have become known to her by familiar observation) it is my will that thou compose certain things in rhyme, in the which thou shalt set forth how strong a mastership I have obtained over thee, through her, and how thou wast hers even from thy childhood. Also do thou call upon him that knoweth these things to bear witness to them, bidding him to speak with her thereof; the which I, who am he, will do willingly. And thus she shall be made to know thy desire; knowing which, she shall know likewise that they were deceived who spake of thee to her. And so write these things, that they shall seem rather to be spoken by a third person; and not directly by thee to her, which is scarce fitting. After the which, send them, not without me, where she may chance to hear them; but have them fitted with a pleasant music, into the which I will pass whensoever it needeth." With this speech he was away, and my sleep was broken up.

Whereupon, remembering me, I knew that I had beheld this vision during the ninth hour of the day; and I resolved that I would make a ditty, before I left my chamber, according to the words my master had spoken. And this is the ditty that I made:

Song, 'tis my will that thou do seek out Love,  
And go with him where my dear lady is;  
That so my cause, the which thy harmonies

Do plead, his better speech may clearly prove.  
 Thou goest, my Song, in such a courteous kind,  
     That even companionless  
     Thou mayst rely on thyself anywhere.  
 And yet, an thou wouldst get thee a safe mind,  
     First unto Love address  
     Thy steps; whose aid, mayhap, 'twere ill to spare,  
     Seeing that she to whom thou mak'st thy prayer  
 Is, as I think, ill-minded unto me,  
 And that if Love do not companion thee,  
     Thou'lt have perchance small cheer to tell me of.

With a sweet accent, when thou com'st to her,  
     Begin thou in these words,  
     First having craved a gracious audience  
 "He who hath sent me as his messenger,  
     Lady, thus much records,  
     An thou but suffer him, in his defense.  
     Love, who comes with me, by thine influence  
 Can make this man do as it liketh him.  
 Wherefore, if this fault is or doth but seem  
     Do thou conceive! for his heart cannot move "

Say to her also: "Lady, his poor heart  
     Is so confirmed in faith  
     That all its thoughts are but of serving thee;  
 'Twas early thine, and could not swerve apart "  
     Then, if she wavereth,  
     Bid her ask Love, who knows if these things be.  
     And in the end, beg of her modestly  
 To pardon so much boldness saying too "  
 "If thou declare his death to be thy due,  
     The thing shall come to pass, as doth behove."

Then pray thou of the Master of all ruth,  
     Before thou leave her there,  
     That he befriend my cause and plead it well.  
 "In guerdon of my sweet rhymes and my truth"  
     (Entreat him) "stay with her,  
     Let not the hope of thy poor servant fail;  
     And if with her thy pleading should prevail,  
 Let her look on him and give peace to him "  
 Gentle my Song, if good to thee it seem,  
     Do this, so worship shall be thine and love.

*This ditty is divided into three parts. In the first, I tell it whither to go, and I encourage it, that it may go the more confidently, and I tell it whose company to join if it would go with confidence and without any danger. In the second, I say that which behoves the ditty to set forth. In the third, I give it leave to start when it pleases, recommending its course to the arms of Fortune. The second part begins here "With a sweet accent," the third here "Gentle my Song." Some might contradict me, and say they understand not whom I address in the second person, seeing that the ditty is merely the very words I am speaking. And therefore I say that this doubt I intend to solve and clear up in this little book itself, at a more difficult passage, and then let him understand who now doubts, or would now contradict as aforesaid.*

After this vision I have recorded, and having written those words which Love had dictated to me, I began to be harassed with many and divers thoughts, by each of which I was sorely tempted; and in especial, there were four among them that left me no rest. The first was this: "Certainly the lordship of Love is good, seeing that it diverts the mind from all mean things." The second was this: "Certainly the lordship of Love is evil, seeing that the more homage his servants pay to him, the more grievous and painful are the torments wherewith he torments them." The third was this: "The name of Love is so sweet in the hearing that it would not seem possible for its effects to be other than sweet, seeing that the name must needs be like unto the thing named; as it is written: *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum*" ("Names are the consequents of things"). And the fourth was this: "The lady whom Love hath chosen out to govern thee is not as other ladies, whose hearts are easily moved."

And by each one of these thoughts I was so sorely

assailed that I was like unto him who doubteth which path to take, and wishing to go, goeth not. And if I bethought myself to seek out some point at the which all these paths might be found to meet, I discerned but one way, and that irked me, to wit, to call upon Pity, and to commend myself unto her. And then, feeling a desire to write somewhat thereof in rhyme, I wrote this sonnet:

All my thoughts always speak to me of Love,  
Yet have between themselves such difference  
That while one bids me bow with mind and sense,  
A second saith, "Go to: look thou above,"  
The third one, hoping, yields me joy enough,  
And with the last come tears, I scarce know whence:  
All of them craving pity in sore suspense,  
Trembling with fears that the heart knoweth of.  
And thus, being all unsure which path to take,  
Wishing to speak I know not what to say,  
And lose myself in amorous wanderings:  
Until (my peace with all of them to make)  
Unto mine enemy I needs must pray,  
My Lady Pity, for the help she brings

*This sonnet may be divided into four parts. In the first, I say and propound that all my thoughts are concerning Love. In the second, I say that they are diverse, and I relate their diversity. In the third, I say wherein they all seem to agree. In the fourth, I say that, wishing to speak of Love, I know not from which of these thoughts to take my argument, and that if I would take it from all, I shall have to call upon mine enemy, My Lady Pity. "Lady" I say, as in a scornful mode of speech. The second begins here "Yet have between themselves," the third "All of them craving," the fourth "And thus"*

After this battling with many thoughts, it chanced on a day that my most gracious lady was with a gathering of ladies in a certain place; to the which I was con-

ducted by a friend of mine; he thinking to do me a great pleasure by showing me the beauty of so many women. Then I, hardly knowing whereunto he conducted me, but trusting in him (who yet was leading his friend to the last verge of life), made question: "To what end are we come among these ladies?" and he answered: "To the end that they may be worthily served." And they were assembled around a gentlewoman who was given in marriage on that day; the custom of the city being that these should bear her company when she sat down for the first time at table in the house of her husband. Therefore I, as was my friend's pleasure, resolved to stay with him and do honor to those ladies.

But as soon as I had thus resolved, I began to feel a faintness and a throbbing at my left side, which soon took possession of my whole body. Whereupon I remember that I covertly leaned my back unto a painting that ran round the walls of that house, and being fearful lest my trembling should be discerned of them, I lifted mine eyes to look on those ladies, and then first perceived among them the excellent Beatrice. And when I perceived her, all my senses were overpowered by the great lordship that Love obtained, finding himself so near unto that most gracious being, until nothing but the spirits of sight remained to me, and even these remained driven out of their own instruments because Love entered in that honored place of theirs, that so he might the better behold her. And, although I was other than at first, I grieved for the spirits so expelled, which kept up a sore lament, saying: "If he had not in this wise thrust us forth, we also should behold the marvel of this lady." By this, many of her friends, having discerned my confusion, began to wonder; and together with herself, kept whispering of me and mocking me. Whereupon my friend, who knew not what to conceive, took me by the hands, and drawing me forth from among them, required



to know what ailed me. Then, having first held me at quiet for a space until my perceptions were come back to me, I made answer to my friend: "Of a surety I have now set my feet on that point of life, beyond the which he must not pass who would return."

Afterwards, leaving him, I went back to the room where I had wept before, and again weeping and ashamed, said: "If this lady but knew of my condition, I do not think she would thus mock at me, nay, I am sure that she must needs feel some pity." And in my weeping, I bethoght me to write certain words, in the which, speaking to her, I should signify the occasion of my disfigurement, telling her also how I knew that she had no knowledge thereof; which, if it were known, I was certain must move others to pity. And then, because I hoped that peradventure it might come into her hearing, I wrote this sonnet:

Even as the others mock, thou mockest me;  
Not dreaming, noble lady, whence it is  
That I am taken with strange semblances,  
Seeing thy face which is so fair to see,  
For else, compassion would not suffer thee  
To grieve my heart with such harsh scoffs as these.  
Lo! Love, when thou are present, sits at ease,  
And bears his mastership so mightily,  
That all my troubled senses he thrusts out,  
Sorely tormenting some, and slaying some,  
Till none but he is left and has free range  
To gaze on thee. This makes my face to change  
Into another's; while I stand all dumb,  
And hear my senses clamor in their rout

*This sonnet I divide not into parts, because a division is only made to open the meaning of the thing divided, and this, as it is sufficiently manifest through the reasons given, has no need of division. True it is that, amid the words whereby is shown the occasion of this sonnet, dubious words are to be found namely, when I say that Love kills all my*

*spirits, but that the visual remain in life, only outside of their own instruments And this difficulty it is impossible for any to solve who is not in equal guise liege unto Love, and, to those who are so, that is manifest which would clear up the dubious words And therefore it were not well for me to expound this difficulty, inasmuch as my speaking would be either fruitless or else superfluous*

A while after this strange disfigurement, I became possessed with a strong conception which left me but very seldom, and then to return quickly. And it was this: "Seeing that thou comest into such scorn by the companionship of this lady, wherefore seekest thou to behold her? If she should ask thee this thing, what answer couldst thou make unto her? yea, even though thou wert master of all thy faculties, and in no way hindered from answering" Unto the which, another very humble thought said in reply. "If I were master of all my faculties, and in no way hindered from answering, I would tell her that no sooner do I image to myself her marvelous beauty than I am possessed with a desire to behold her, the which is of so great strength that it kills and destroys in my memory all those things which might oppose it, and it is therefore that the great anguish I have endured thereby is yet not enough to restrain me from seeking to behold her." And then, because of these thoughts, I resolved to write somewhat, wherein, having pleaded my excuse, I should tell her of what I felt in her presence. Whereupon I wrote this sonnet:

The thoughts are broken in my memory,  
Thou lovely Joy, whene'er I see thy face;  
When thou art near me, Love fills up the space,  
Often repeating, "If death irk thee, fly."  
My face shows my heart's color, verily,  
Which, fainting, seeks for any leaning-place;  
Till, in the drunken terror of disgrace,

The very stones seem to be shrieking, "Diel!"  
 It were a grievous sin, if one should not  
     Strive then to comfort my bewildered mind  
     (Though merely with a simple pitying)  
 For the great anguish which thy scorn has wrought  
     In the dead sight o' the eyes grown nearly blind,  
     Which look for death as for a blessed thing.

*This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first, I tell the cause why I abstain from coming to this lady. In the second, I tell what befalls me through coming to her, and this part begins here "When thou art near." And also this second part divides into five distinct statements. For, in the first I say what Love, counseled by Reason, tells me when I am near the lady. In the second, I set forth the state of my heart by the example of the face. In the third, I say how all ground of trust fails me. In the fourth, I say that he sins who shows not pity of me, which would give me some comfort. In the last, I say why people should take pity, namely, for the pitious look which comes into mine eyes, which pitious look is destroyed, that is, appeareth not unto others, through the jeering of this lady, who draws to the like action those who peradventure would see this pit-cousness. The second part begins here "My face shows," the third "Till in the drunken terror," the fourth "It were a grievous sin," the fifth "For the great anguish."*

Thereafter, this sonnet bred in me desire to write down in verse four other things touching my condition, the which things it seemed to me that I had not yet made manifest. The first among these was the grief that possessed me very often, remembering the strangeness which Love wrought in me; the second was, how Love many times assailed me so suddenly and with such strength that I had no other life remaining except a thought that spake of my lady; the third was, how, when Love did battle with me in this wise, I would rise up all colorless, if so I might see my lady, conceiving that the

sight of her would defend me against the assault of Love, and altogether forgetting that which her presence brought unto me; and the fourth was, how, when I saw her, the sight not only defended me not, but took away the little life that remained to me And I said these four things in a sonnet, which is this.

At whiles (yea, oftentimes) I muse over  
The quality of anguish that is mine  
Through Love, then pity makes my voice to pine,  
Saying, "Is any else thus, anywhere?"  
Love smiteth me, whose strength is ill to bear;  
So that of all my life is left no sign  
Except one thought, and that, because 'tis thine,  
Leaves not the body but abideth there  
And then if I, whom other aid forsook,  
Would aid myself, and innocent of art  
Would fain have sight of thee as a last hope,  
No sooner do I lift mine eyes to look  
Than the blood seems as shaken from my heart,  
And all my pulses beat at once and stop

*This sonnet is divided into four parts, four things being therein narrated, and as these are set forth above, I only proceed to distinguish the parts by their beginnings Wherefore I say that the second part begins "Love smiteth me," the third "And then if I," the fourth "No sooner do I lift"*

After I had written these three last sonnets wherein I spake unto my lady, telling her almost the whole of my condition, it seemed to me that I should be silent, having said enough concerning myself. But albeit I spake not to her again, yet it behoved me afterward to write of another matter, more noble than the foregoing. And for that the occasion of what I then thought may be found pleasant in the hearing, I will relate it as briefly as I may.

Through the sore change in mine aspect, the secret of

my heart was now understood of many. Which thing being thus, there came a day when certain ladies to whom it was well known (they having been with me at divers times in my trouble) were met together for the pleasure of gentle company. And as I was going that way by chance (but I think rather by the will of fortune), I heard one of them call unto me, and she that called was a lady of very sweet speech. And when I had come close up to them, and perceived that they had not among them mine excellent lady, I was reassured; and saluted them, asking of their pleasure. The ladies were many; divers of whom were laughing one to another, while divers gazed at me as though I should speak anon. But when I still spake not, one of them, who before had been talking with another, addressed me by my name, saying, "To what end lovest thou this lady, seeing that thou canst not support her presence? Now tell us this thing, that we may know it; for certainly the end of such a love must be worthy of knowledge." And when she had spoken these words, not she only, but all they that were with her, began to observe me, waiting for my reply. Whereupon I said thus unto them: "Ladies, the end and aim of my love was but the salutation of that lady of whom I conceive that ye are speaking; wherein alone I found that beatitude which is the goal of desire. And now that it hath pleased her to deny me this, Love, my Master, of his great goodness, hath placed all my beatitude there where my hope will not fail me." Then those ladies began to talk closely together; and as I have seen snow fall among the rain, so was their talk mingled with sighs. But after a little, that lady who had been the first to address me, addressed me again in these words: "We pray thee that thou wilt tell us wherein abideth this thy beatitude." And answering, I said but thus much: "In those words that do praise my lady." To the which she rejoined:

"If thy speech were true, those words that thou didst write concerning thy condition would have been written with another intent."

Then I, being almost put to shame because of her answer, went out from among them; and as I walked, I said within myself: "Seeing that there is so much beatitude in those words which do praise my lady, wherefore hath my speech of her been different?" And then I resolved that thenceforward I would choose for the theme of my writings only the praise of this most gracious being. But when I had thought exceedingly, it seemed to me that I had taken to myself a theme that was much too lofty, so that I dared not begin, and I remained for several days in the desire of speaking, and the fear of beginning. After which it happened, as I passed one day along a path that lay beside a stream of very clear water, that there came upon me a great desire to say somewhat in rhyme; but when I began thinking how I should say it, methought that to speak of her were unseemly, unless I spoke to other ladies in the second person, which is to say, not to *any* other ladies, but only to such as are so called because they are gentle, let alone for mere womanhood. Whereupon I declare that my tongue spake as if by its own impulse, and said, "Ladies that have intelligence in love." These words I laid up in my mind with great gladness, conceiving to take them as my beginning. Wherefore, having returned to the city I spake of, and considered thereof during certain days, I began a poem with this beginning, constructed in the mode that will be seen below in its division. The poem begins here:

Ladies that have intelligence in Love,  
Of mine own lady I would speak with you;  
Not that I hope to count her praises through,  
But telling what I may, to ease my mind.  
And I declare that when I speak thereof,

Love sheds such perfect sweetness over me  
That if my courage failed not, certainly  
    To him my listeners must be all resign'd.  
Wherefore I will not speak in such large kind  
That mine own speech should foil me, which were base;  
But only will discourse of her high grace  
    In these poor words, the best that I can find,  
With you alone, dear dames and damozels:  
'Twere ill to speak thereof with any else.

An Angel, of his blessed knowledge, saith  
    To God, "Lord, in the world that Thou hast made,  
    A miracle in action is display'd,  
    By reason of a soul whose splendors fare  
Even hither; and since Heaven requireth  
Naught saving her, for her it prayeth Thee,  
Thy Saints crying aloud continually."  
    Yet Pity still defends our earthly share  
    In that sweet soul, God answering thus the prayer:  
"My well-beloved, suffer that in peace  
Your hope remain, while so My pleasure is,  
    There where one dwells who dreads the loss of her  
And who in Hell unto the doomed shall say,  
'I have looked on that for which God's chosen pray.'"

My lady is desired in the high heaven  
    *Wherefore*, it now behoveth me to tell,  
    Saying: Let any maid that would be well  
    Esteemed keep with her! for as she goes by,  
Into foul hearts a deathly chill is driven  
By Love, that makes ill thought to perish there;  
While any who endures to gaze on her  
    Must either be ennobled, or else die  
    When one deserving to be raised so high  
Is found, 'tis then her power attains its proof,  
Making his heart strong for his soul's behoof  
    With the full strength of meek humility.  
Also this virtue owns she, by God's will.  
Who speaks with her can never come to ill

Love saith concerning her: "How chanceth it  
    That flesh, which is of dust, should be thus pure?"  
    Then, gazing always, he makes oath: "For sure,  
    This is a creature of God till now unknown."

She hath that paleness of the pearl that's fit  
 In a fair woman, so much and not more;  
 She is as high as Nature's skill can soar;  
 Beauty is tried by her comparison.

Whatever her sweet eyes are turned upon,  
 Spirits of love do issue thence in flame,  
 Which through their eyes who then may look on them  
 Pierce to the heart's deep chamber every one.  
 And in her smile Love's image you may see;  
 Whence none can gaze upon her steadfastly.

Dear Song, I know thou wilt hold gentle speech  
 With many ladies, when I send thee forth.  
 Wherefore (being mindful that thou hadst thy birth  
 From Love, and art a modest, simple child),  
 Whomso thou meetest, say thou this to each:  
 "Give me good speed! To her I wend along  
 In whose much strength my weakness is made strong."  
 And if, 't' the end, thou wouldst not be beguiled  
 Of all thy labor, seek not the defiled  
 And common sort, but rather choose to be  
 Where man and woman dwell in courtesy.  
 So to the road thou shalt be reconciled,  
 And find the lady, and with the lady, Love.  
 Commend thou me to each, as doth behove

*This poem, that it may be better understood, I will divide more subtly than the others preceding, and therefore, I will make three parts of it. The first part is a proem to the words following. The second is the matter treated of. The third is, as it were, a handmaid to the preceding words. The second begins here, "An Angel," the third here, "Dear Song, I know." The first part is divided into four. In the first, I say to whom I mean to speak of my lady, and wherefore I will so speak. In the second, I say what she appears to myself to be when I reflect upon her excellence, and what I would utter if I lost not courage. In the third, I say what it is I purpose to speak of as not to be impeded by faintheartedness. In the fourth, repeating to whom I purpose speaking, I tell the reason why I speak to them*



*The second begins here. "And I declare;" the third here "Wherefore I will not speak," the fourth here. "With you alone" Then, when I say "An Angel," I begin treating of this lady and this part is divided into two In the first, I tell what is understood of her in heaven In the second I tell what is understood of her on earth here, "My lady is desired." This second part is divided into two, for, in the first, I speak of her as regards the nobleness of her soul, relating some of her virtues proceeding from her soul, in the second, I speak of her as regards the nobleness of her body, narrating some of her beauties here, "Love saith concerning her" This second part is divided into two, for in the first, I speak of certain beauties that belong to the whole person, in the second, I speak of certain beauties that belong to a distinct part of the person here, "Whatever her sweet eyes" This second part is divided into two, for, in the one, I speak of the eyes, which are the beginning of love, in the second, I speak of the mouth, which is the end of love And, that every vicious thought may be discarded herefrom, let the reader remember that it is above written that the greeting of this lady, which was an act of her mouth, was the goal of my desires while I could receive it Then, when I say, "Dear Song, I know," I add a stanza as it were handmaid to the others, wherein I say what I desire from this my poem And because this last part is easy to understand, I trouble not myself with more divisions I say, indeed, that the further to open the meaning of this poem, more minute divisions ought to be used, but nevertheless he who is not of wit enough to understand it by these which have been already made is welcome to leave it alone, for, certes, I fear I have communicated its sense to too many by these present divisions, if it so happened that many should hear it*

When this song was a little gone abroad, a certain one of my friends, hearing the same, was pleased to question

me, that I should tell him what thing love is; it may be, conceiving from the words thus heard a hope of me beyond my desert. Wherefore I, thinking that after such discourse it were well to say somewhat of the nature of Love, and also in accordance with my friend's desire, purposed to write certain words in the which I should treat of this argument. And the sonnet that I then made is this:

Love and the gentle heart are one same thing,  
 Even as the wise man\* in his ditty saith:  
 Each, of itself, would be such life in death  
 As rational soul bereft of reasoning.  
 'Tis Nature makes them when she loves: a king  
 Love is, whose palace where he sojourneth  
 Is called the Heart, there draws he quiet breath  
 At first, with brief or longer slumbering.  
 Then beauty seen in virtuous womankind  
 Will make the eyes desire, and through the heart  
 Send the desiring of the eyes again,  
 Where often it abides so long enshrined  
 That Love at length out of his sleep will start.  
 And women feel the same for worthy men.

*This sonnet is divided into two parts. In the first part, I speak of him according to his power. In the second, I speak of him according as his power translates itself into act. The second part begins here, "Then beauty seen." The first is divided into two. In the first, I say in what subject this power exists. In the second, I say how this subject and this power are produced together, and how the one regards the other, as form does matter. The second begins here "'Tis Nature." Afterward, when I say, "Then beauty seen in virtuous womankind," I say how this power translates itself into act, and, first, how it so translates itself in a man, then how it translates itself in a woman here "And women feel."*

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\* Guido Guinicelli, in the *canzone* that begins, "Within the gentle heart Love shelters him."

Having treated of love in the foregoing, it appeared to me that I should also say something in praise of my lady, wherein it might be set forth how love manifested itself when produced by her; and how not only she could awaken it where it slept, but where it was not she could marvelously create it. To the which end I wrote another sonnet; and it is this:

My lady carries love within her eyes;  
 All that she looks on is made pleasanter;  
 Upon her path men turn to gaze at her;  
 He whom she greeteth feels his heart to rise,  
 And droops his troubled visage, full of sighs,  
 And of his evil heart is then aware.  
 Hate loves, and pride becomes a worshiper.  
 O women, help to praise her in somewise.  
 Humbleness, and the hope that hopeth well,  
 By speech of hers into the mind are brought,  
 And who beholds is blessed oftenwhiles.  
 The look she hath when she a little smiles  
 Cannot be said, nor holden in the thought;  
 'Tis such a new and gracious miracle.

*This sonnet has three sections. In the first, I say how this lady brings this power into action by those most noble features, her eyes, and, in the third, I say this same as to that most noble feature, her mouth. And between these two sections is a little section, which asks, as it were, help for the previous section and the subsequent, and it begins here "O women, help." The third begins here "Humbleness." The first is divided into three, for, in the first, I say how she with power makes noble that which she looks upon, and this is as much as to say that she brings Love, in power, thither where he is not. In the second, I say how she brings Love, in act, into the hearts of all those whom she sees. In the third, I tell what she afterward, with virtue, operates upon their hearts. The second begins "Upon her path," the third, "He whom she greeteth." Then, when I say, "O women, help," I intimate to whom it*

*is my intention to speak, calling on women to help me to honor her. Then, when I say, "Humbleness," I say that same which is said in the first part, regarding two acts of her mouth, one whereof is her most sweet speech, and the other her marvelous smile. Only, I say not of this last how it works upon the hearts of others, because memory cannot retain this smile, nor its influence.*

Not many days after this (it being the will of the most High God, who also from Himself put not away death), the father of wonderful Beatrice, going out of this life, passed certainly into glory. Thereby it happened, as of very sooth it might not be otherwise, that this lady was made full of the bitterness of grief: seeing that such a parting is very grievous unto those friends who are left, and that no other friendship is like to that between a good parent and a good child; and furthermore considering that this lady was good in the supreme degree, and her father (as by many it hath been truly averred) of exceeding goodness. And because it is the usage of that city that men meet with men in such a grief, and women with women, certain ladies of her companionship gathered themselves unto Beatrice, where she kept alone in her weeping: and as they passed in and out, I could hear them speak concerning her, how she wept. At length two of them went by me, who said: "Certainly she grieveth in such sort that one might die for pity, beholding her." Then, feeling the tears upon my face, I put up my hands to hide them: and had it not been that I hoped to hear more concerning her (seeing that where I sat, her friends passed continually in and out), I should assuredly have gone thence to be alone, when I felt the tears come. But as I still sat in that place, certain ladies again passed near me, who were saying among themselves: "Which of us shall be joyful any more, who have listened to this lady in her piteous

sorrow?" And there were others who said as they went by me: "He that sitteth here could not weep more if he had beheld her as we have beheld her;" and again: "He is so altered that he seemeth not as himself." And still as the ladies passed to and fro, I could hear them speak after this fashion of her and of me.

Wherefore afterward, having considered and perceiving that there was herein matter for poesy, I resolved that I would write certain rhymes in the which should be contained all that those ladies had said. And because I would willingly have spoken them if it had not been for discreetness, I made in my rhymes as if I had spoken and they had answered me. And thereof I wrote two sonnets; in the first of which I addressed them as I would fain have done; and in the second related their answer, using the speech that I had heard from them, as if it had been spoken unto myself. And the sonnets are these:

You that thus wear a modest countenance  
With lids weigh'd down by the heart's heaviness,  
Whence come you, that among you every face  
Appears the same, for its pale troubled glance?  
Have you beheld my lady's face, perchance,  
Bow'd with the grief that Love makes full of grace?  
Say now, "This thing is thou," as my heart says,  
Marking your grave and sorrowful advance.  
And if indeed you come from where she sighs  
And mourns, may it please you (for his heart's relief)  
To tell how it fares with her unto him  
Who knows that you have wept, seeing your eyes,  
And is so grieved with looking on your grief  
That his heart trembles and his sight grows dim

*This sonnet is divided into two parts In the first, I call and ask these ladies whether they come from her, telling them that I think they do, because they return the nobler In the second, I pray them to tell me of her, and the second begins here, "And if indeed"*

Canst thou indeed be he that still would sing  
Of our dear lady unto none but us?  
For though thy voice confirms that it is thus,  
Thy visage might another witness bring.  
And wherefore is thy grief so sore a thing  
That grieving thou mak'st others dolorous?  
Hast thou too seen her weep, that thou from us  
Canst not conceal thine inward sorrowing?  
Nay, leave our woe to us, let us alone;  
"Twere sin if one should strive to soothe our woe,  
For in her weeping we have heard her speak,  
Also her looks so full of her heart's moan.  
That they who should behold her, looking so,  
Must fall aswoon, feeling all life grow weak.

*This sonnet has four parts, as the ladies in whose person I reply had four forms of answer. And, because these are sufficiently shown above, I stay not to explain the purport of the parts, and therefore I only discriminate them. The second begins here "And wherefore is thy grief," the third here "Nay, leave our woe;" the fourth. "Also her look"*

A few days after this, my body became afflicted with a painful infirmity, whereby I suffered bitter anguish for many days, which at last brought me unto such weakness that I could no longer move. And I remember that on the ninth day, being overcome with intolerable pain, a thought came into my mind concerning my lady; but when it had a little nourished this thought, my mind returned to its brooding over mine enfeebled body. And then perceiving how frail a thing life is, even though health keep with it, the matter seemed to me so pitiful that I could not choose but weep; and weeping I said within myself: "Certainly it must some time come to pass that the very gentle Beatrice will die." Then, feeling bewildered, I closed mine eyes; and my brain began to be in travail as the brain of one frantic, and to have such imaginations as here follow.

And at the first, it seemed to me that I saw certain

faces of women with their hair loosened, which called out to me, "Thou shalt surely die;" after the which, other terrible and unknown appearances said unto me, "Thou art dead." At length, as my phantasy held on in its wanderings, I came to be I knew not where, and to behold a throng of disheveled ladies wonderfully sad, who kept going hither and thither weeping. Then the sun went out, so that the stars showed themselves, and they were of such a color that I knew they must be weeping; and it seemed to me that the birds fell dead out of the sky, and that there were great earthquakes. With that, while I wondered in my trance, and was filled with a grievous fear, I conceived that a certain friend came unto me and said: "Hast thou not heard? She that was thine excellent lady hath been taken out of life." Then I began to weep very piteously; and not only in mine imagination, but with mine eyes, which were wet with tears. And I seemed to look toward Heaven, and to behold a multitude of angels that were returning upwards, having before them an exceedingly white cloud, and these angels were singing together gloriously, and the words of their song were these: "*Osanna in excelsis*," and there was no more that I heard. Then my heart that was so full of love said unto me: "It is true that our lady lieth dead;" and it seemed to me that I went to look upon the body wherein that blessed and most noble spirit had had its abiding-place. And so strong was this idle imagining, that it made me to behold my lady in death; whose head certain ladies seemed to be covering with a white veil; and who was so humble of her aspect that it was as if she had said, "I have attained to look on the beginning of peace." And therewithal I came unto such humility by the sight of her, that I cried out upon Death, saying: "Now come unto me, and be not bitter against me any longer; surely there where thou hast been, thou hast learned gentleness. Where-

fore come now unto me who do greatly desire thee: seest thou not that I wear thy color already?" And when I had seen all those offices performed that are fitting to be done unto the dead, it seemed to me that I went back unto mine own chamber, and looked up toward Heaven. And so strong was my phantasy, that I wept again in very truth, and said with my true voice: "O excellent soul! how blessed is he that now looketh upon thee!"

And as I said these words, with a painful anguish of sobbing and another prayer unto Death, a young and gentle lady, who had been standing beside me where I lay, conceiving that I wept and cried out because of the pain of mine infirmity, was taken with trembling and began to shed tears. Whereby other ladies, who were about the room, becoming aware of my discomfort by reason of a moan that she made (who indeed was of my very near kindred), led her away from where I was, and then set themselves to awaken me, thinking that I dreamed and saying: "Sleep no longer, and be not disquieted."

Then, by their words, this strong imagination was brought suddenly to an end, at the moment that I was about to say, "O Beatrice! peace be with thee." And already I had said, "O Beatrice!" when being aroused, I opened mine eyes, and knew that it had been a deception. But albeit I had indeed uttered her name, yet my voice was so broken with sobs, that it was not understood by these ladies; so that in spite of the sore shame that I felt, I turned toward them by Love's counseling. And when they beheld me, they began to say, "He seemeth as one dead," and to whisper among themselves, "Let us strive whether we may not comfort him." Whereupon they spake to me many soothing words, and questioned me moreover touching the cause of my fear. Then I, being somewhat reassured, and having perceived that it was a mere phantasy, said unto them,



"This thing it was that made me afear'd;" and told them of all that I had seen, from the beginning even unto the end, but without once speaking the name of my lady. Also, after I had recovered from my sickness, I bethought me to write these things in rhyme; deeming it a lovely thing to be known. Whereof I wrote this poem:

A very pitiful lady, very young,  
Exceeding rich in human sympathies,  
Stood by, what time I clamor'd upon Death,  
And at the wild words wandering on my tongue  
And at the piteous look within mine eyes  
She was affrighted, that sobs choked her breath.  
So by her weeping where I lay beneath,  
Some other gentle ladies came to know  
My state, and made her go.  
Afterward, bending themselves over me,  
One said, "Awaken thee!"  
And one, "What thing thy sleep disquieteth?"  
With that, my soul woke up from its eclipse,  
The while my lady's name rose to my lips.

But utter'd in a voice so sob-broken,  
So feeble with the agony of tears,  
That I alone might hear it in my heart;  
And though that look was on my visage then  
Which he who is ashamed so plainly wears,  
Love made that I through shame held not apart,  
But gazed upon them. And my hue was such  
That they look'd at each other and thought of death;  
Saying under their breath  
Most tenderly, "O let us comfort him:"  
Then unto me: "What dream  
Was thine, that it hath shaken thee so much?"  
And when I was a little comforted,  
"This, ladies, was the dream I dreamt," I said.  
"I was a-thinking how life fails with us  
Suddenly after such a little while;  
When Love sobb'd in my heart, which is his home.  
Whereby my spirit wax'd so dolorous  
That in myself I said, with sick recoil:  
'Yea, to my lady too this Death must come.'

And therewithal such a bewilderment  
Possess'd me, that I shut mine eyes for peace;  
And in my brain did cease  
Order of thought, and every healthful thing.  
Afterward, wandering  
Amid a swarm of doubts that came and went,  
Some certain women's faces hurried by,  
And shriek'd to me, 'Thou too shalt die, shalt die!'

"Then saw I many broken hunted sights  
In the uncertain state I stepp'd into.  
Meseem'd to be I know not in what place,  
Where ladies through the street, like mournful lights,  
Ran with loose hair, and eyes that frighten'd you  
By their own terror, and a pale amaze  
The while, little by little, as I thought,  
The sun ceased, and the stars began to gather,  
And each wept at the other,  
And birds dropp'd in mid-flight out of the sky;  
And earth shook suddenly,  
And I was 'ware of one, hoarse and tired out,  
Who ask'd of me 'Hast thou not heard it said  
Thy lady, she that was so fair, is dead?'

"Then lifting up mine eyes, as the tears came,  
I saw the Angels, like a rain of manna,  
In a long flight flying back heavenward,  
Having a little cloud in front of them,  
After the which they went and said, 'Hosanna,'  
And if they had said more, you should have heard.  
Then Love said, 'Now shall all things be made clear:

"'Come and behold our lady where she lies.'  
These 'wilderling phantasies  
Then carried me to see my lady dead.  
Even as I there was led,  
Her ladies with a veil were covering her;  
And with her was such very humbleness  
That she appeared to say, 'I am at peace.'

"And I became so humble in my grief,  
Seeing in her such deep humility,  
That I said. 'Death, I hold thee passing good

Henceforth, and a most gentle sweet relief,  
 Since my dear love has chosen to dwell with thee:  
 Pity, not hate, is thine, well understood.  
 Lo! I do so desire to see thy face  
 That I am like as one who nears the tomb;  
 My soul entreats thee, Come.'  
 Then I departed, having made my moan;  
 And when I was alone  
 I said, and cast my eyes to the High Place:  
 'Blessed is he, fair soul, who meets thy glance!  
 . . . just then you woke me, of your com-  
 plaisance."

*This poem has two parts. In the first, speaking to a person undefined, I tell how I was aroused from a vain phantasy by certain ladies, and how I promised them to tell what it was. In the second, I say how I told them. The second part begins here "I was a-thinking." The first part divides into two. In the first I tell that which certain ladies and which one singly, did and said because of my phantasy, before I had returned into my right senses. In the second, I tell what these ladies said to me after I had left off this wandering and it begins here "But uttered in a voice." Then, when I say, "I was a-thinking," I say how I told them this my imagination, and concerning this I have two parts. In the first, I tell, in order, this imagination. In the second, saying at what time they called me, I covertly thank them and this part begins here "Just then you woke me."*

After this empty imagining, it happened on a day, as I sat thoughtful, that I was taken with such a strong trembling at the heart, that it could not have been otherwise in the presence of my lady. Whereupon I perceived that there was any appearance of Love beside me, and I seemed to see him coming from my lady; and he said, not aloud but within my heart: "Now take heed that thou bless the day when I entered into thee; for it is fitting that thou shouldst do so." And with that my heart

was so full of gladness, that I could hardly believe it to be of very truth mine own heart and not another.

A short while after these words which my heart spoke to me with the tongue of Love, I saw coming toward me a certain lady who was very famous for her beauty, and of whom that friend whom I have already called the first among my friends had long been enamored. This lady's right name was Joan; but because of her comeliness (or at least it was so imagined) she was called of many *Primavera* (Spring), and went by that name among them. Then looking again, I perceived that the most noble Beatrice followed after her. And when both these ladies had passed by me, it seemed to me that Love spake again in my heart, saying: "She that came first was called Spring, only because of that which was to happen on this day. And it was I myself who caused that name to be given to her; seeing that as the Spring cometh first in the year, so should she come first on this day, when Beatrice was to show herself after the vision of her servant. And even if thou go about to consider her right name, it is also as one should say, 'She shall come first;' inasmuch as her name, Joan, is taken from that John who went before the True Light, saying: '*Ego vox Clamantis in deserto. Parate viam Domini.*'" "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'" And also it seemed to me that he added other words, to wit: "He who should inquire delicately touching this matter, could not but call Beatrice by mine own name, which is to say, Love; beholding her so like unto me."

Then I, having thought of this, purposed to write it with rhymes and send it unto my chief friend; but setting aside certain words which seemed proper to be set aside, because I believed that his heart still regarded the beauty of her that was called Spring. And I wrote this sonnet:

I felt a spirit of love begin to stir  
 Within my heart, long time unfelt till then;  
 And saw Love coming toward me, fair and fain  
 (That I scarce knew him for his joyful cheer),  
 Saying, "Be now indeed my worshiper!"  
 And in his speech he laugh'd and laugh'd again.  
 Then, while it was his pleasure to remain,  
 I chanced to look the way he had drawn near,  
 And saw the Ladies Joan and Beatrice  
 Approach me, this the other following,  
 One and a second marvel instantly.  
 And even as now my memory speaketh this,  
 Love spake it then. "The first is christen'd Spring;  
 The second Love, she is so like to me"

*This sonnet has many parts whereof the first tells how I felt awakened within my heart the accustomed tremor, and how it seemed that Love appeared to me joyful from afar. The second says how it appeared to me that Love spake within my heart, and what was his aspect. The third tells how, after he had in such wise been with me a space, I saw and heard certain things. The second part begins here "Saying, 'Be now.'" the third here "Then while it was his pleasure" The third part divides into two. In the first, I say what I saw. In the second, I say what I heard, and it begins here "Love spoke it then"*

It might be here objected unto me (and even by one worthy of controversy) that I have spoken of Love as if it were a thing outward and visible: not only a spiritual essence, but as a bodily substance also. The which thing, in absolute truth, is a fallacy; Love not being of itself a substance, but an accident of substance. Yet that I speak of Love as if it were a thing tangible and even human, appears by three things which I say thereof. And firstly, I say that I perceived Love coming toward me; whereby, seeing that *to come* bespeaks locomotion, and seeing also how philosophy teacheth us that none but a corporeal substance hath locomotion, it

seemeth that I speak of Love as of a corporal substance. And secondly, I say that Love smiled; and thirdly, that Love spake; faculties (and especially the risible faculty) which appear proper unto man; whereby it further seemeth that I speak of Love as of a man. Now that this inatter may be explained (as is fitting), it must first be remembered that anciently they who wrote poems of Love wrote not in the vulgar tongue, but rather certain poets in the Latin tongue, I mean, among us, although perchance the same may have been among others, and although likewise, as among the Greeks, they were not writers of spoken language, but men of letters treated of these things.\* And indeed it is not many years since poetry began to be made in the vulgar tongue; the writing of rhymes in spoken language corresponding to the writing in metre of Latin verse, by a certain analogy. And I say that it is but a little while, because if we examine the language of *oco* and the language of *si*, (*ie*, the languages of Provence and Tuscany,) we shall not find in those tongues any written thing of an earlier date than the last hundred and fifty years. Also the reason that certain of a very mean sort obtained at the first some fame as poets is, that before them no man had written verses in the language of *si* and of these the first was moved to the writing of such verses by the wish to make himself understood of a certain lady, unto whom Latin poetry was difficult. This thing is against such as rhyme concerning other matters than love; that mode of speech having been first used for the expression of

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\*On reading Dante's treatise, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, it will be found that the distinction he intends here is not between one language, or dialect, and another, but between "vulgar speech" (that is, the language handed down from mother to son without any conscious use of grammar or syntax), and language as regulated by grammarians and the laws of literary composition, which Dante calls simply "Grammar"

love alone.\* Wherefore, seeing that poets have a license allowed them that is not allowed unto the writers of prose, and seeing also that they who write in rhyme are simply poets in the vulgar tongue, it becomes fitting and reasonable that a larger license should be given to these than to other modern writers; and that any metaphor or rhetorical similitude which is permitted unto poets, should also be counted not unseemly in the rhymers of the vulgar tongue. Thus, if we perceive that the former have caused inanimate things to speak as if they had sense and reason, and to discourse one with another; yea, and not only actual things, but such also as have no real existence (seeing that they have made things which are not, to speak; and oftentimes written of those which are merely accidents as if they were substances and things human); it should therefore be permitted to the latter to do the like; which is to say, not inconsiderately, but with such sufficient motive as may afterward be set forth in prose.

That the Latin poets have done thus, appears through Virgil, where he saith that Juno (to wit, a goddess hostile to the Trojans) spake unto Æolus, master of the Winds; as it is written in the first book of the *Æneid*, *Æole, namque tibi, etc*, and that this master of the Winds made reply: *Tuus, o regina, quid optes—Explorare labor, mihi jussa capessere fas est*. And through the same poet, the inanimate thing speaketh unto the animate, in the

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\*It strikes me that this curious passage furnishes a reason, hitherto (I believe) overlooked, why Dante put such of his lyrical poems as relate to philosophy into the form of love-poems. He liked writing in Italian rhyme rather than Latin meter, he thought Italian rhyme ought to be confined to love-poems; therefore whatever he wrote (at his age) had to take the form of a love-poem. Thus any poem by Dante not concerning love is later than his twenty-seventh year (1291-2), when he wrote the prose of the *Vita Nuova*, the poetry having been written earlier, at the time of the events referred to.

third book of the *Æneid*, where it is written: *Dardanioe duri, etc* With Lucan the animate think speaketh to the inanimate; as thus: *Multum, Roma, tamen debes civilibus armis*. In Horace, man is made to speak to his own intelligence as unto another person; and not only hath Horace done this, but herein he followeth the excellent Homer, as thus in his *Poetics*: *Dic mihi, Musa' virum, etc* Through Ovid, Love speaketh as a human creature, in the beginning of his discourse *De Remedus Amoris* as thus; *Bella mihi, video, bella parantur, at* By which ensamples this thing shall be made manifest unto such as may be offended at any part of this my book. And lest of the common sort should be moved to jeering thereat, I will here add, that neither did these ancient poets speak thus without consideration, nor should they who are makers of rhyme in our day write after the same fashion, having no reason in what they write, for it were a shameful thing if one should rhyme under the semblance of metaphor or rhetorical similitude, and afterward, being questioned thereof, should be unable to rid his words of such semblance, unto their right understanding. Of whom (to wit, of such as rhyme thus foolishly) myself and the first among my friends do know many.

But returning to the matter of my discourse. This excellent lady, of whom I spake in what hath gone before, came at last into such favor with all men, that when she passed anywhere folk ran to behold her; which thing was a deep joy to me: and when she drew near unto any, so much truth and simpleness entered into his heart, that he dared neither to lift his eyes nor to return her salutation: and unto this, many who have felt it can bear witness. She went along crowned and clothed with humility, showing no whit of pride in all that she heard and saw: and when she had gone by, it was said of many, "This is not a woman, but one of



the beautiful angels of heaven." And there were some that said: "This is surely a miracle; blessed be the Lord, who hath power to work thus marvelously." I say, of very sooth, that she showed herself so gentle and so full of all perfection, that she bred in those who looked upon her a soothing quiet beyond any speech; neither could any look upon her without sighing immediately. These things, and things still more wonderful, were brought to pass through her miraculous virtue. Wherefore I, considering thereof and wishing to resume the endless tale of her praises, resolved to write somewhat wherein I might dwell on her surpassing influence, to the end that not only they who had beheld her, but others also, might know as much concerning her as words could give to the understanding. And it was then that I wrote this sonnet:

My lady looks so gentle and so pure  
When yielding salutation by the way,  
That the tongue trembles and has naught to say,  
And the eyes, which fain would see, may not endure.  
And still, amid the praise she hears secure,  
She walks with humbleness for her array,  
Seeming a creature sent from Heaven to stay  
On earth, and show a miracle made sure  
She is so pleasant in the eyes of men  
That through the sight the inmost heart doth gain  
A sweetness which needs proof to know it by  
And from between her lips there seems to move  
A soothing essence that is full of love,  
Saying forever to the spirit, "Sigh!"

This sonnet is so easy to understand, from what is afore narrated, that it needs no division; and therefore, leaving it, I say also that this excellent lady came into such favor with all men, that not only she herself was honored and commended, but through her companionship, honor and commendation came unto others. Wherefore I, perceiving this, and wishing that it should also

be made manifest to those that beheld it not, wrote the sonnet here following; wherein is signified the power that her virtue had upon other ladies :

For certain he hath seen all perfectness  
Who among other ladies hath seen mine:  
They that go with her humbly should combine  
To thank their God for such peculiar grace.  
So perfect is the beauty of her face  
That it begets in no wise any sign  
Of envy, but draws round her a clear line  
Of love, and blessed faith, and gentleness.  
Merely the sight of her makes all things bow:  
Not she herself alone is holier  
Than all, but hers, through her, are raised above.  
From all her acts such lovely graces flow  
That truly one may never think of her  
Without a passion of exceeding love.

*This sonnet has three parts In the first, I say in what company this lady appeared most wondrous In the second I say how gracious was her society In the third I tell of the things that she, with power, worked upon others The second begins here "They that go with her," the third here "So perfect" This last part divides into three In the first, I tell what was her influence upon women, that is, by their own faculties In the second, I tell how she influenced them through others In the third, I say how she not only influenced women, but all people, and not only while herself present, but, by memory of her, influenced wondrously The second begins here "Merely the sight," the third here. "From all her acts"*

Thereafter on a day, I began to consider that which I had said of my lady: to wit, in these two sonnets aforegone: and becoming aware that I had not spoken of her immediate effect on me at that especial time, it seemed to me that I had spoken defectively. Whereupon I resolved to write somewhat of the manner wherein I

was then subject to her influence, and of what her influence then was. And conceiving that I should not be able to say these things in the small compass of a sonnet, I began therefore a poem with this beginning:

Love hath so long possessed me for his own  
 And made his lordship so familiar  
 That he, who at first irked me, is now grown  
 Unto my heart as its best secrets are.  
 And thus, when he in such sore wise doth mar  
 My life that all its strength seems gone from it,  
 Mine inmost being then feels thoroughly quit  
 Of anguish, and all evil keeps afar.  
 Love also gathers to such power in me  
 That my sighs speak, each one a grievous thing,  
 Always soliciting  
 My lady's salutation pitiously.  
 Whenever she beholds me, it is so,  
 Who is more sweet than any words can show

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*Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populo! facta est quasi vidua domina gentium!* ("How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow, she that was great among the nations!"—*Lamentations of Jeremiah*, i 1.)

I was still occupied with this poem (having composed thereof only the above-written stanza) when the Lord God of justice called my most gracious lady unto Himself, that she might be glorious under the banner of that blessed Queen Mary, whose name had always a deep reverence in the words of holy Beatrice. And because haply it might be found good that I should say somewhat concerning her departure, I will herein declare the reasons that impel me not to do so.

And the reasons are three. The first is, that such matter belongeth not of right to the present argument, if one consider the opening of this little book. The second

is, that even though the present argument require it, my pen doth not suffice to write in a fit manner of this thing. And the third is, that were it both possible and of absolute necessity, it would still be unseemly for me to speak thereof, seeing that thereby it must behove me to speak also mine own pieces: a thing that in whosoever doeth it is worthy of blame. For the which reasons, I will leave this matter to be treated of by some other than myself.

Nevertheless, as the number nine, which number hath often had mention in what hath gone before (and not, as it might appear, without reason), seems also to have borne a part in the manner of her death, it is therefore right that I should say somewhat thereof. And for this cause, having first said what was the part it bore, I will afterward point out a reason which made that this number was so closely allied unto my lady.

I say, then, that according to the division of time in Italy, her most noble spirit departed from among us in the first hour of the ninth day of the month; and according to the division of time in Syria, in the ninth month of the year; seeing that Tismim, which with us is October, is there the first month. Also she was taken from among us in that year of our reckoning (to wit, of the years of our Lord) in which the perfect number was nine times multiplied within that century wherein she was born into the world; which is to say, the thirteenth century of Christians.\*

And touching the reason why this number was so

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\* Beatrice Portinari will thus be found to have died during the first hour of the 9th of June, 1290. And from what Dante says at the beginning of this work (that she was younger than himself by eight or nine months), it may also be gathered that her age, at the time of death, was twenty-four years and three months. The "perfect number" mentioned in the present passage is the number ten.

closely allied unto her, it may peradventure be this. According to Ptolemy (and also to the Christian verity), the revolving heavens are nine; and according to the common opinion among astrologers, these nine heavens together have influence over the earth. Wherefore it would appear that this number was thus allied unto her for the purpose of signifying that, at her birth, all these nine heavens were at perfect unity with each other as to their influence. This is one reason that may be brought; but more narrowly considering, and according to the infallible truth, this number was her own self, that is to say, by similitude. As thus: The number three is the root of the number nine, seeing that without the interposition of any other number being multiplied merely by itself, it produceth nine, as we manifestly perceive that three times three are nine. Thus, three being of itself the efficient of nine, and the Great Efficient of Miracles being of Himself Three Persons (to wit: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), which, being Three, are also One:—this lady was accompanied by the number nine to the end that men might clearly perceive her to be a nine, that is, a miracle, whose only root is the Holy Trinity. It may be that a more subtle person would find for this thing a reason of greater subtlety: but such is the reason that I find, and that liketh me best

After this most gracious creature had gone out from among us, the whole city came to be as it were widowed and despoiled of all dignity. Then I, left mourning in this desolate city, wrote unto the principal persons thereof, in an epistle, concerning its condition; taking for my beginning those words of Jeremias: *Quomodo sedet sola civitas!* etc. And I make mention of this that none may marvel wherefore I set down these words before, in beginning to treat of her death. Also if any should blame me, in that I do not transcribe that epistle whereof I have

spoken, I will make it mine excuse that I began this little book with the intent that it should be written altogether in the vulgar tongue; wherefore, seeing that the epistle I speak of is in Latin, it belongeth not to mine undertaking: more especially as I know that my chief friend, for whom I write this book, wished also that the whole of it should be in the vulgar tongue.

When mine eyes had wept for some while, until they were so weary with weeping that I could no longer through them give ease to my sorrow, I bethought me that a few mournful words might stand me instead of tears. And therefore I proposed to make a poem, that weeping I might speak therein of her for whom so much sorrow had destroyed my spirit; and I then began "The eyes that weep"

*That this poem may seem to remain the more widowed at its close, I will divide it before writing it, and this method I will observe henceforward I say that this poor little poem has three parts The first is a prelude In the second, I speak of her In the third, I speak pitifully to the poem The second begins here "Beatrice is gone up," the third here "Weep, pitiful Song of mine" The first divides into three In the first I say what moves me to speak In the second I say to whom I mean to speak In the third I say of whom I mean to speak The second begins here "And because often, thinking," the third here "And I will say" Then, when I say, "Beatrice is gone up," I speak of her, and concerning this I have two parts, First, I tell the cause why she was taken away from us, afterward I say how one weeps her parting, and this part begins here "Wonderfully" This part divides into three In the first I say who it is that weeps her not In the second I say who it is that doth weep her In the third I speak of my condition The second begins here: "But sighing comes, and grief." the third "With sighs" Then*

*when I say, "Weep, pitiful Song of mine," I speak to this  
my song, telling it what ladies to go to, and stay with.*

The eyes that weep for pity of the heart  
Have wept so long that their grief languisheth,  
And they have no more tears to weep withal:  
And now, if I would ease me of a part  
Of what, little by little, leads to death,  
It must be done by speech, or not at all.  
And because often, thinking, I recall  
How it was pleasant, ere she went afar  
To talk of her with you, kind damozels,  
I talk with no one else,  
But only with such hearts as women's are.  
And I will say—still sobbing as speech fails—  
That she hath gone to Heaven suddenly,  
And hath left Love below, to morn with me.

Beatrice has gone up into high Heaven,  
The kingdom where the angels are at peace,  
And lives with them, and to her friends is dead.  
Not by the frost of winter was she driven  
Away, like others; nor by summer-heats;  
But through a perfect gentleness instead.  
For from the lamp of her meek lowlihead  
Such an exceeding glory went up hence  
That it woke wonder in the Eternal Sire,  
Until a sweet desire  
Entered Him for that lovely excellence,  
So that He bade her to Himself aspire;  
Counting this weary and most evil place  
Unworthy of a thing so full of grace.

Wonderfully out of the beautiful form  
Soared her clear spirit, waxing glad the while;  
And is in its first home, there where it is,  
Who speaks thereof, and feels not the tears warm  
Upon his face, must have become so vile  
As to be dead to all sweet sympathies.  
Out upon him! an abject wretch like this  
May not imagine anything of her—  
He needs no bitter tears for his relief  
But sighing comes, and grief,

And the desire to find no comforter  
(Save only Death, who makes all sorrows brief),  
To him who for a while turns in his thought  
How she hath been among us, and is not.

With sighs my bosom always laboreth  
In thinking, as I do continually,  
Of her for whom my heart now breaks apace;  
And very often when I think of death,  
Such a great inward longing comes to me  
That it will change the color of my face;  
And, if the idea settles in its place,  
All my limbs shake as with an ague-fit;  
Till, starting up in wild bewilderment,  
I do become so shent  
That I go forth, lest folk misdoubt of it,  
Afterward, calling with a sore lament  
On Beatrice, I ask, "Canst thou be dead?"  
And calling on her I am comforted.

Grief with its tears, and anguish with its sighs,  
Come to me now whene'er I am alone;  
So that I think the sight of me gives pain  
And what my life hath been, that living dies,  
Since for my lady the New Birth's begun,  
I have not any language to explain.  
And so, dear ladies, though my heart were fain,  
I scarcely could tell indeed how I am thus.  
All joy is with my bitter life at war;  
Yea, I am fallen so far  
That all men seem to say, "Go out from us,"  
Eyeing my cold white lips, how dead they are.  
But she, though I be bowed unto the dust,  
Watches me, and will guerdon me, I trust.

Weep, pitiful Song of mine, upon thy way,  
To the dames going and the damozels  
For whom and for none else  
Thy sisters have made music for many a day.  
Thou, that art very sad and not as they,  
Go dwell thou with them as a mourner dwells.

After I had written this poem, I received the visit of  
a friend whom I counted as second unto me in the de-



grees of friendship, and who, moreover, had been united by the nearest kindred to that most gracious creature. And when we had a little spoken together, he began to solicit me that I would write somewhat in memory of a lady who had died; and he disguised his speech, so as to seem to be speaking of another who was but lately dead: wherefore I, perceiving that his speech was of none other than the blessed one herself, told him that it should be done as he required. Then afterward having thought thereof, I imagined to give vent in a sonnet to some part of my hidden lamentations; but in such sort that it might seem to be spoken by this friend of mine, to whom I was to give it. And the sonnet saith thus: "Stay now with me," etc.

*This sonnet has two parts In the first, I call the Faithful of Love to hear me In the second, I relate my miserable condition The second begins here "Mark how they force"*

Stay now with me, and listen to my sighs,  
Ye pitious hearts, as pity bids ye do.  
Mark how they force their way out and press through;  
If they be once pent up, the whole life dies  
Seeing that now indeed my weary eyes  
Oftener refuse than I can tell to you  
(Even though my endless grief is ever new),  
To weep and let the smothered anguish rise.  
Also in sighing ye shall hear me call  
On her whose blessed presence doth enrich  
The only home that well befitted her:  
And ye shall hear a bitter scorn of all  
Sent from the inmost of my spirit in speech  
That mourns its joy and its joy's minister.

But when I had written this sonnet, bethinking me who he was to whom I was to give it, that it might appear to be his speech, it seemed to me that this was but a poor and barren gift for one of her so near kindred.

Wherefore, before giving him this sonnet, I wrote two stanzas of a poem; the first being written in very sooth as if it were spoken by him, but the other being mine own speech, albeit, unto one who should not look closely, they would both seem to be said by the same person. Nevertheless, looking closely, one must perceive that it is not so, inasmuch as one does not call this most gracious creature *his lady*, and the other does, as is manifestly apparent. And I gave the poem and the sonnet unto my friend, saying that I had made them only for him.

*The poem begins, "Whatever while," and has two parts In the first, that is, the first stanza, this my dear friend, her kinsman, laments In the second I lament, that is, in the other stanza, which begins, "Forever" And thus it appears that in this poem two persons lament, of whom one laments as a brother, the other as a servant*

Whatever while the thought comes over me  
That I may not again  
Behold that lady whom I mourn for now,  
About my heart my mind brings constantly  
So much of extreme pain  
That I say, Soul of mine, why stayest thou?  
Truly the anguish, Soul, that we must bow  
Beneath, until we win out of this life,  
Gives me full oft a fear that trembleth  
So that I call on Death  
Even as on Sleep one calleth after strife,  
Saying, Come unto me. Life showeth grim  
And bare; and if one dies, I envy him.

Forever, among all my sighs which burn,  
There is a piteous speech  
That clamors upon Death continually:  
Yea, unto him doth my whole spirit turn  
Since first his hand did reach  
My lady's life with most foul cruelty.  
But from the height of woman's fairness, she,

Going up from us with the joy we had,  
Grew perfectly and spiritually fair;  
That so she spreads even there  
A light of Love which makes the Angels glad,  
And even unto their subtle minds can bring  
A certain awe of profound marveling

On that day which fulfilled the year since my lady had been made of the citizens of eternal life, remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets. And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did; also I learned afterward that they had been there a while before I had perceived them. Perceiving whom, I arose for salutation, and said: "Another was with me."

Afterward, when they had left me, I set myself again to mine occupation, to wit, to the drawing figures of angels; in doing which, I conceived to write of this matter in rhyme, as for her anniversary, and to address my rhymes unto those who had just left me. It was then that I wrote the sonnet that saith, "That lady," and as this sonnet hath two beginnings, it behooveth me to divide it with both of them here.

*I say that, according to the first, this sonnet has three parts. In the first, I say this lady was then in my memory. In the second, I tell what Love therefore did with me. In the third, I speak of the effects of Love. The second begins here: "Love knowing," the third here: "Forth went they." This part divides into two. In the one, I say that all my sighs issued speaking. In the other, I say how some spoke certain words different from the others. The second begins here: "And still." In this same manner it is divided with the other beginning, save that, in the first part, I tell*

*when this lady had thus come into my mind and this I say not in the other.*

That lady of all gentle memories  
Had lighted on my soul;—whose new abode  
Lies now, as it was well ordained of God,  
Among the poor in heart, where Mary is.  
Love, knowing that dear image to be his,  
Woke up within the sick heart sorrow-bow'd,  
Unto the sighs that are its weary load  
Saying, "Go forth." And they went forth, I wis;  
Forth went they from my breast that throbb'd and ached;  
With such a pang as oftentimes will bathe  
Mine eyes with tears when I am left alone.  
And still those sighs which drew the heaviest breath  
Came whispering thus: "O noble intellect!  
It is a year to-day that thou art gone."

The second beginning was this:

That lady of all gentle memories  
Had lighted on my soul, for whose sake flow'd  
The tears of Love; in whom the power abode  
That led you to observe while I did this.  
Love, knowing that dear image to be his, etc.

Then, having sat for some space sorely in thought because of the time that was now past, I was so filled with dolorous imaginings that it became outwardly manifest in mine altered countenance. Whereupon, feeling this and being in dread lest any should have seen me, I lifted mine eyes to look; and then perceived a young and very beautiful lady, who was gazing upon me from a window with a gaze full of pity, so that the very sum of pity appeared gathered together in her. And seeing that unhappy persons, when they beget compassion in others, are then most moved unto weeping, as if they also felt pity for themselves, it came to pass that mine eyes began to be inclined unto tears. Wherefore, becoming fearful lest I should make manifest mine abject

condition, I rose up, and went where I could not be seen of that lady; saying afterward within myself: "Certainly with her also must abide most noble Love." And with that, I resolved upon writing a sonnet, wherein, speaking unto her, I should say all that I have just said. And as this sonnet is very evident, I will not divide it:

Mine eyes beheld the blessed pity spring  
Into thy countenance immediately  
A while ago, when thou beheldest in me  
The sickness only hidden grief can bring;  
And then I knew thou wast considering  
How abject and forlorn my life must be;  
And I became afraid that thou shouldst see  
My weeping, and account it a base thing.  
Therefore I went out from thee, feeling how  
The tears were straight way loosened at my heart  
Beneath thine eyes' compassionate control  
And afterward I said within my soul.  
"Lo! with this lady dwells the counterpart  
Of the same Love who holds me weeping now."

It happened after this, that whensoever I was seen of this lady, she became pale and of a piteous countenance, as if it had been with love, whereby she remembered me many time of my own most noble lady, who was wont to be of a like paleness. And I know that often, when I could not weep nor in any way give ease unto mine anguish, I went to look upon this lady, who seemed to bring the tears into my eyes by the mere sight of her. Of the which thing I bethought me to speak unto her in rhyme, and then made this sonnet: which begins, "Love's pallor," and which is plain without being divided, by its exposition aforesaid:

Love's pallor and the semblance of deep ruth  
Were never yet shown forth so perfectly  
In any lady's face, chancing to see  
Grief's miserable countenance uncouth.

As in thine, lady, they have sprung to soothe,  
When in mine anguish thou hast looked on me;  
Until sometimes it seems as if, through thee,  
My heart might almost wander from its truth,  
Yet so it is, I cannot hold mine eyes  
From gazing very often upon thine  
In the sore hope to shed those tears they keep;  
And at such time, thou mak'st the pent tears rise  
Even to the brim, till the eyes waste and pine;  
Yet cannot they, while thou are present, weep.

At length, by the constant sight of this lady, mine eyes began to be gladdened overmuch with her company; through which thing many times I had much unrest, and rebuked myself as a base person: also, many times I cursed the unsteadfastness of mine eyes, and said to them inwardly: "Was not your grievous condition of weeping wont one while to make others weep? And will ye now forget this thing because a lady looketh upon you? who so looketh merely in compassion of the grief ye then showed for your own blessed lady. But whatso ye can, that do ye, accursed eyes! many a time will I make you remember it! for never, till death dry you up, should ye make an end of your weeping." And when I had spoken thus unto mine eyes, I was taken again with extreme grievous sighing. And to the end that this inward strife which I had undergone might not be hidden from all saving the miserable wretch who endured it, I proposed to write a sonnet, and to comprehend in it this horrible condition. And I wrote this which begins, "The very bitter weeping."

*The sonnet has two parts In the first, I speak to my eyes, as my heart spoke within myself In the second, I remove a difficulty showing who it is that speaks thus, and this part begins here "So far" It well might receive other divisions also, but this would be useless, since it is manifest by the preceding exposition*

"The very bitter weeping that ye made  
So long a time together, eyes of mine,  
Was wont to make the tears of pity shine  
In other eyes full oft, as have said.  
But now this thing were scarce remembered  
If I, on my part, foully would combine  
With you, and not recall each ancient sign  
Of grief, and her for whom your tears were shed.  
It is your fickleness that doth betray  
My mind to fears, and makes me tremble thus  
What while a lady greets me with her eyes.  
Except by death, we must not any way  
Forget our lady who is gone from us"  
So far doth my heart utter, and then sighs.

The sight of this lady brought me into so unwonted a condition that I often thought of her as of one too dear unto me; and I began to consider her thus: "This lady is young, beautiful, gentle, and wise; perchance it was Love himself who set her in my path, that so my life might find peace." And there were times when I thought still more fondly, until my heart consented unto its reasoning. But when it had so consented, my thought would often turn round upon me, as if moved by reason, and cause me to say within myself: "What hope is this which would console me after so base a fashion, and which hath taken the place of all other imagining?" Also there was another voice within me which said: "And wilt thou, having suffered so much tribulation through Love, not escape while yet thou mayst from so much bitterness? Thou must surely know that this thought carries with it the desire of Love, and drew its life from the gentle eyes of that lady who vouchsafed thee so much pity." Wherefore I, having striven sorely and very often with myself, bethought me to say somewhat thereof in rhyme. And seeing that in the battle of doubts, the victory most often remained with such as inclined toward the lady of whom I speak, it seemed to me that I should address this sonnet unto her: in

the first line whereof, I call that thought which spake of her a gentle thought, only because it spake of one who was gentle; being of itself most vile.\*

*In this sonnet I make myself into two, according as my thoughts were divided one from the other. The one part I call Heart, that is, appetite, the other, Soul, that is, reason, and I tell what one saith to the other. And that it is fitting to call the appetite Heart, and the reason Soul, is manifest enough to them to whom I wish this to be open. True it is that, in the preceding sonnet, I take the part of the Heart against the Eyes, and that appears contrary to what I say in the present, and therefore I say that, there also, by the Heart I mean appetite, because still greater was my desire to remember my most gentle lady than to see this other, although indeed I had some desire toward her, but it appeared slight, wherefrom it appears that the one statement is not contrary to the other. This sonnet has three parts. In the first I begin to say to this lady how my desires turn all toward her. In the second I say how the Soul, that is, the reason, speaks to the Heart, that is, to the appetite. In the third, I say how the latter answers. The second begins here "And what is this?" the third here "And the heart answers"*

A gentle thought there is will often start,  
 Within my secret self to speech of thee:  
 Also of Love it speaks so tenderly  
 That much in me consents and takes its part.  
 "And what is this," the Soul saith to the Heart,  
 "That cometh thus to comfort thee and me,  
 And thence where it would dwell, thus potently  
 Can drive all other thoughts by its strange art?"  
 And the Heart answers: "Be no more at strife

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\* Boccaccio tells us that Dante was married to Gemma Donati about a year after the death of Beatrice. Can Gemma then be "the lady of the window," his love for whom Dante so contemns?



"Twixt doubt and doubt: this is Love's messenger  
And speaketh but his words, from him received;  
And all the strength it owns and all the life  
It draweth from the gentle eyes of her  
Who, looking on our grief, hath often grieved."

But against this adversary of reason, rose in me on a certain day, about the ninth hour, a strong visible phantasy, wherein I seemed to behold the most gracious Beatrice, habited in that crimson raiment which she had worn when I had first beheld her; also she appeared to me of the same tender age as then. Whereupon I fell into a deep thought of her; and my memory ran back, according to the order of time, unto all those matters in the which she had borne a part; and my heart began painfully to repent of the desire by which it had so basely let itself be possessed for so many days, contrary to the constancy of reason.

And then, this evil desire being quite gone from me, all my thoughts turned again unto their excellent Beatrice. And I say most truly that from that hour I thought constantly of her with the whole humbled and ashamed heart; the which became often manifest in sighs, that had among them the name of that most gracious creature, and how she departed from us. Also it would come to pass very often, through the bitter anguish of some one thought, that I forget both it and myself, and where I was. By this increase of sighs, my weeping, which before had been somewhat lessened, increased in like manner; so that mine eyes seemed to long only for tears and to cherish them, and came at last to be circled about with red, as if they had suffered martyrdom; neither were they able to look again upon the beauty of any face that might again bring them to shame and evil; from which things it will appear that they were fitly guerdoned for their unsteadfastness. Wherefore I (wishing that mine abandonment of all

such evil desires and vain temptations should be certified and made manifest, beyond all doubts that might have been suggested by the rhymes aforewritten) proposed to write a sonnet wherein I should express this purport. And I then wrote, "Woe's me!"

*I said, "Woe's me!" Because I was ashamed of the trifling of mine eyes This sonnet I do not divide, since its purport is manifest enough*

Woe's me! by dint of all these sighs that come  
Forth of my heart, its endless grief to prove,  
Mine eyes are conquered, so that even to move  
Their lids for greeting is grown troublesome.  
They wept so long that now they are grief's home,  
And count their tears all laughter far above:  
They wept till they are circled now by Love  
With a red circle in sign of martyrdom.  
These musings, and the sighs they bring from me,  
Are grown at last so constant and so sore  
That love swoons in my spirit with faint breath;  
Hearing in those sad sounds continually  
The most sweet name that my dead lady bore,  
With many grievous words touching her death.

About this time, it happened that a great number of persons undertook a pilgrimage, to the end that they might behold that blessed portraiture bequeathed unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ as the image of His beautiful countenance\* (upon which countenance my dear lady now looketh continually). And certain among these pilgrims, who seemed very thoughtful, passed by a path which is well-nigh in the midst of the city where my most gracious lady was born, and abode, and at last died.

Then I, beholding them, said within myself: "These

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\*The Veronica (*Vera icon*, or true image); that is, the napkin with which a woman was said to have wiped our Saviour's face on his way to the cross, which miraculously retained its likeness. Dante makes mention of it also in the *Commedia* (Parad. **xxi.** 103).

pilgrims seemed to be come from very far; and I think they cannot have heard speak of this lady, or know anything concerning her. Their thoughts are not of her, but of other things; it may be, of their friends who are far distant, and whom we, in our turn, know not." And I went on to say: "I know that if they were of a country near unto us, they would in some wise seem disturbed, passing through this city which is so full of grief." And I said also: "If I could speak with them a space, I am certain that I should make them weep before they went forth of this city; for these things that they would hear from me must needs beget weeping in any."

And when the last of them had gone by me, I be-thought me to write a sonnet, showing forth mine inward speech; and that it might seem the more pitiful, I made as if I had spoken it indeed unto them. And I wrote this sonnet, which beginneth: "Ye pilgrim-folk." I made use of the word *pilgrim* for its general signification; for "pilgrim" may be understood in two senses, one general, and one special. General, so far as any man may be called a pilgrim who leaveth the place of his birth; whereas, more narrowly speaking, he only is a pilgrim who goeth toward or forward to the House of St. James. For there are three separate denominations proper unto those who undertake journeys to the glory of God. They are called Palmers who go beyond the seas eastward, whence often they bring palm-branches. And Pilgrims, as I have said, are they who journey unto the holy House of Galicia; seeing that no other apostle was buried so far from his birthplace as was the blessed St. James. And there is a third sort who are called Romers; in that they go whither these whom I have called pilgrims went; which is to say, unto Rome.

*This sonnet is not divided, because its own words sufficiently declare it.*

Ye pilgrim-folk, advancing pensively  
As if in thought of distant things, I pray,  
Is your own land indeed so far away—  
As by your aspect it would seem to be—  
That thus our heavy sorrow leaves you free  
Though passing through the mournful town midway;  
Like unto men that understand to-day  
Nothing at all of her great misery?  
Yet if ye will but stay, whom I accost,  
And listen to my words a little space,  
At going ye shall mourn with a loud voice.  
It is her Beatrice that she hath lost,  
Of whom the least word spoken holds such grace  
That men weep hearing it, and have no choice.

A while after these things, two gentle ladies sent unto me, praying that I would bestow upon them certain of these my rhymes. And I (taking into account their worthiness and consideration) resolved that I would write also a new thing, and send it to them together with those others, to the end that their wishes might be more honorably fulfilled. Therefore I made a sonnet, which narrates my condition, and which I caused to be conveyed to them, accompanied by the one preceding, and with that other which begins, "Stay now with me and listen to my sighs." And the new sonnet is, "Beyond the sphere."

*This sonnet comprises five parts. In the first, I tell whither my thoughts goeth, naming the place by the name of one of its effects. In the second, I say wherefore it goeth up, and who makes it go thus. In the third, I tell what it saw, namely, a lady honored. And I then call it a "Pilgrim Spirit," because it goes up spiritually and like a pilgrim that is out of his own country. In the fourth, I say how the spirit sees her such that is, in such quality that I cannot understand her, that is to say, my thought rises to the quality of her in a degree that my intellect cannot comprehend, seeing that our intellect is weak toward those blessed*

souls like our eye against the sun, and this the Philosopher says in the *Second of the Metaphysics*. In the fifth, I say that, although I cannot see there whither my thought carries me—that is, to her admirable essence—I at least understand this, namely, that it is a thought of my lady, because I often hear her name therein. And, at the end of this fifth part, I say, “Ladies mine,” to show that they are ladies to whom I speak. The second part begins “A new perception;” the third “When it hath reached,” the fourth “It sees her such,” the fifth “And yet I know.” It might be divided still more nicely, and made still cleverer, but this division may pass, and therefore I stay not to divide it further.

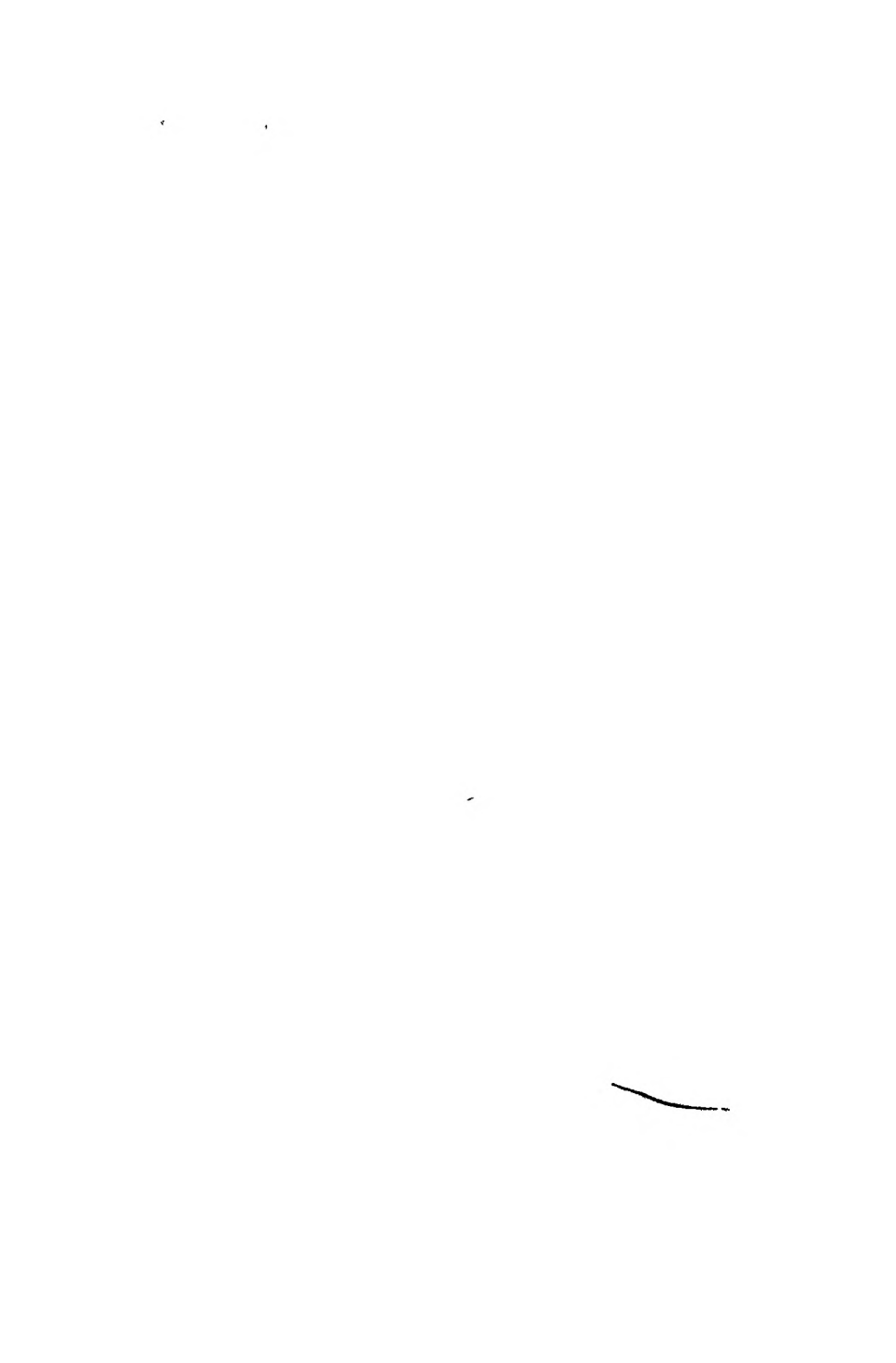
Beyond the sphere that spreads to widest space  
 Now soars the sight that my heart sends above:  
 A new perception born of grieving Love  
 Guideth it upward the untrodden ways  
 When it hath reached unto the end, and stays,  
 It sees a lady round whom splendors move  
 In homage, till, by the great light thereof  
 Abashed, the pilgrim spirit stands at gaze.  
 It sees her such that when it tells me this  
 Which it hath seen I understand it not,  
 It hath a speech so subtle and so fine.  
 And yet I know its voice within my thought  
 Often remembereth me of Beatrice:  
 So that I understand it, ladies mine.

After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision,\* wherein I saw things that determined me to say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more

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\*Thus we may believe to have been the Vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, which furnished the triple argument of the *Divina Commedia*. The Latin words ending the *Vita Nuova* are almost identical with those at the close of the letter in which Dante, on concluding the *Paradiso*, and accomplishing the hope here expressed, dedicates his great work to Can Grande della Scala.

worthily concerning her. And to this end I labor all I can; as she well knoweth. Wherefore if it be His pleasure through Whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good unto Him who is the Master of Grace that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady: to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance *qui est per omnia saecula benedictus* ("Who is blessed throughout all ages"). *Laus Deo.*



**SONNETS**  
**BY**  
**FRANCESCO PETRARCH**



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## INTRODUCTION

**P**ETRARCH'S family were Florentines; but his father had fled from Florence because of an unjust accusation and condemnation, and the poet was born in Arezzo, July 20, 1304. In the same night when he was born his father was with the force of Ghibellines that was defeated in an attempt to capture Florence. This ruined their cause, and the elder Petrarch had thenceforth much difficulty in maintaining his family. His wife retired to a small property at Ancisa, a few miles from Florence, with the infant boy, where they lived till he was seven years old. The father then took his little family successively to Pisa, to Avignon in southern France, and in 1315 to Carpentras, where the boy had his first schooling, and fortunately had an instructor who appreciated the genius that had already begun to show itself. One day he went with a party to Vaucluse, and expressed his admiration for it as a place of retirement, not conscious that it was destined to become famous through his future residence there, or that centuries later an English poet would write—

"At wild Vaucluse with love and Laura dwell."

and every reader would understand the allusion; and still later another world-known poet would write—

"Petrarch's Vaucluse makes famed the Sorgue."

The young poet surpassed all his fellow students in study of the classics, and was especially charmed with the works of Cicero. His father was himself scholar enough to appreciate this and encourage it, and sent Francesco to the University of Montpellier, where he remained four years and attended the law lectures. But he had too much conscience to adopt a profession that appeared to him necessarily involved in questionable transactions, though his father had set his heart upon a legal career for his son. Francesco studied next at Bologna, made the acquaintance there of *litterateurs*, and began to write poetry. On the death of his parents he went to Avignon in 1326, where his younger brother lived. Finding their patrimony too meager to sustain them, they both entered the priesthood. At that time the Papal court was at Avignon. The next year, on Good Friday, in the Church of Santa Clara, in Avignon, he first saw Laura, the lady of his sonnets. She was a little younger than he, had golden hair plaited in long tresses, and wore a green mantle sprinkled with violets. He fell in love with her at once, and this love was the grand passion of his life. Petrarch himself is said to have been very handsome, with a musical voice and fine powers in conversation. Laura, who was married to a rather morose man, to whom she bore ten children, was so well pleased with the attentions of the poet that she encouraged them and retained them just as far as was consistent with innocence. The sonnets in which he celebrated her beauty and her virtues followed one another in rapid succession and proclaimed the affair to all their friends.

Either because of this hopeless passion, or because of his desire to find old manuscripts of the classics, or for both reasons, Petrarch became an extensive traveler. He visited most of the cities of Italy, France and southern Germany. His first move was to accompany his friend, Giacomo Colonna, who had been appointed Bishop of Lombes, in France. There, in the shadow of the Pyrenees, he found little congenial society except in the household of the Bishop, and within a year he returned to Avignon. In the wanderings that followed, he spent much time in Paris, of which he wrote: "Paris, though always inferior to its fame, and much indebted to the lies of its own people, is undoubtedly a great city. To be sure, I never saw a dirtier place, except Avignon. At the same time, its population contains the most learned men, and it is like a great basket in which are collected the rarest fruits of every country."

As he proceeded in his travels he found that his fame had gone before him, and he was everywhere received with distinction. On his return to Avignon he found a plague raging there, and retired to the wild valley of Vaucluse. This was in 1337. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1340, and the next year was crowned as such in Rome. In 1348 Laura died of the plague. There was much mystery as to her identity for four centuries, when at last the Abbé de Sade, writing the biography of Petrarch, discovered that she was the daughter of Audibert de Noves, a Provençal nobleman, and was the wife of Hugues de Sade. Yet, as in all such cases, there are some critics that decline to admit the Abbé's conclusions.

Petrarch had risen to considerable rank in official life, his property and citizenship in Florence were restored, and he was entrusted with important diplomatic missions. In 1370, being infirm and somewhat ill, he retired, with his natural daughter and her husband, to Arquà, where he continued his literary labors, the last of which was a Latin translation of Boccaccio's *Griseildis*. On July 18, 1374, he was found dead in his study, with his head on a book.

Among the classical manuscripts that Petrarch rescued from oblivion, perhaps the most important was Cicero's *Familiar Letters*. He wrote elaborate treatises in Latin, and contributed much to the revival of learning. Of these works there were several editions in the two centuries after his death. His Italian poetry has appeared in hundreds of editions; and one collector, early in the nineteenth century, brought together nine hundred volumes relating to his life. Among his commentators are Tassoni and Leopardi. The most complete biography in English is that by Thomas Campbell, the poet, which appeared in 1841.

TRANSLATORS OF THE SONNETS—Of the sonnets here presented, Lord Charlemont translated No. 1; Francis Wrangham translated Nos. 3, 9, 19, 82 and 83, Miss Wollaston translated Nos. 4, 6, 8, 11, 23, 30, 31, 49, 66, 68, 75 and 98, Lady Dacre translated Nos. 12, 39, and 40, Capel Lofft translated Nos. 13, 14 and 95; Dr. Nott translated Nos. 16, 20, 21, 50, 61, 69, 77, 88, and 99; Miss Wrottesley translated No. 47; Basil Kennett translated No. 52; John Penn translated No. 67; Geoffrey Chaucer translated No. 87, Sir Thomas Wyatt translated Nos. 89 and 90; Drummond of Hawthornden translated No. 94; Nos. 5, 22, 35, 71 and 93 are anonymous translations. The other translations are Macgregor's.

R. J.

## SONNET I

*Voi, ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono*

**U**E who in rhymes dispersed the echoes hear  
Of those sad sighs with which my heart I fed  
When early youth my mazy wanderings led,  
Fondly diverse from what I now appear,  
Fluttering 'twixt frantic hope and frantic fear,  
From those by whom my various style is read  
I hope, if e'er their hearts for love have bled,  
Not only pardon, but perhaps a tear.  
But now I clearly see that of mankind  
Long time I was the tale: whence bitter thought  
And self-reproach with frequent blushes teem;  
While of my frenzy, shame the fruit I find,  
And sad repentance, and the proof, dear-bought,  
That the world's joy is but a flitting dream.

## SONNET II

*Per far una leggiadra sua vendetta*

One sweet and signal vengeance to obtain,  
To punish in a day my life's long crime,  
As one who bent on harm, waits place and time,  
Love craftily took up his bow again.  
My virtue had retired to watch my heart,  
Thence of weak eyes the danger to repel,  
When momentarily a mortal blow there fell  
Where blunted hitherto dropped every dart.  
And thus, o'erpowered in that first attack,  
She had nor vigor left enough, nor room  
Even to arm her for my pressing need,  
Nor to the steep and painful mountain back  
To draw me, safe and scatheless from that doom,  
Whence, though alas! too weak, she fain had freed.

## SONNET III

*Era 'l giorno ch' al sol si scorlararo*

'Twas on the morn, when heaven its blessed ray  
In pity to its suffering Master veil'd,  
First did I, Lady, to your beauty yield,  
Of your victorious eyes the unguarded prey.  
Ah! little reck'd I that, on such a day,  
Needed against Love's arrows any shield;  
And trod, securely trod, the fatal field:  
Whence, with the world's, began my heart's dismay.  
On every side Love found his victim bare,  
And through mine eyes transfix'd my throbbing heart;  
Those eyes, which now with constant sorrows flow:  
But poor the triumph of his boasted art,  
Who thus could pierce a naked youth, nor dare  
To you in armor mail'd even to display his bow!

## SONNET IV

*Quel ch' infinita provvidenza ed arte*

The High Eternal, in whose works supreme  
The Master's vast creative power hath spoke:  
At whose command each circling sphere awoke,  
Jove mildly rose, and Mars with fiercer beam,  
To earth He came, to ratify the scheme  
Reveal'd to us through prophecy's dark cloak,  
To sound redemption, speak man's fallen yoke;  
He chose the humblest for that heavenly theme.  
But he conferr'd not on imperial Rome  
His birth's renown; He chose a lowlier sky,  
To stand, through Him, the proudest spot on earth!  
And now doth shine within its humble home  
A star that doth each other so outvie,  
That grateful nature hails its lovely birth.

## SONNET V

*Quand' io move i sospiri a chiamar voi*

In sighs when I outbreathe your cherish'd name,  
That name which love has writ upon my heart,  
LAUd instantly upon my doting tongue,  
At the first thought of its sweet sound, is heard;  
Your REgal state, which I encounter next,  
Doubles my valor in that high emprise:  
But TAcit ends the word; your praise to tell  
Is fitting load for better backs than mine.  
Thus all who call you, by the name itself,  
Are taught at once to LAUd and to REvere,  
O worthy of all reverence and esteem!  
Save that perchance Apollo may disdain  
That mortal tongue of his immortal boughs  
Should ever so presume as e'en to speak.

## SONNET VI

*Si travato é 'l folle mio desio*

My tameless will doth recklessly pursue  
Her, who, unshackled by love's heavy chain,  
Flies swiftly from its chase, while I in vain  
My fetter'd journey pantingly renew;  
The safer track I offer to its view,  
But hopeless is my power to restrain;  
It rides regardless of the spur or rein;  
Love makes it scorn the hand that would subdue.  
The triumph won, the bridle all its own,  
Without one curb I stand within its'power,  
And my destruction helplessly presage;  
It guides me to that laurel, ever known,  
To all who seek the healing of its flower,  
To aggravate the wound it should assuage.



## SONNET VII

*A piè de' colli ove la bella vesta*

Beneath the verdant hills—where the fair vest  
Of earthly mould first took the Lady dear,  
Who him that sends us, feather'd captives, here  
Awakens often from his tearful rest—  
Lived we in freedom and in quiet, blest  
With everything that life below might cheer,  
No foe suspecting, harass'd by no fear  
That aught our wanderings ever could molest;  
But snatch'd from that serener life, and thrown  
To the low wretched state we here endure,  
One comfort, short of death, survives alone:  
Vengeance upon our captor full and sure!  
Who, slave himself at others' power, remains  
Pent in worse prison, bound by sterner chains.

## SONNET VIII

*Quando 'l pianeta che distingue l'ore*

When Taurus in his house doth Phœbus keep,  
So bright a virtue issues from his crest  
That Nature wakes, and stands in beauty drest,  
The flow'ring meadows start with joy from sleep;  
Nor they alone rejoice—earth's bosom deep  
(Though not one beam illumines her night of rest)  
Responsive smiles, and from her fruitful breast  
Gives forth her treasures for her sons to reap.  
Thus she, who dwells amid her sex a sun,  
Shedding upon my soul her eyes' full light,  
Each thought creates, each deed, each word of love;  
But though my heart's proud mastery she hath won,  
Alas! within me dwells eternal night;  
My spirit ne'er Spring's genial breath doth prove.

## SONNET IX

*Se la mia vita dall' aspro tormento*

If o'er each bitter pang, each hidden throe,  
Sadly triumphant I my years drag on,  
Till even the radiance of those eyes is gone,  
Lady, which star-like now illumine thy brow;  
And silver'd are those locks of golden glow,  
And wreaths and robes of green aside are thrown,  
And from thy cheek those hues of beauty flown,  
Which check'd so long the utterance of my woe,  
Haply my bolder tongue may then reveal  
The bosom'd annals of my heart's fierce fire,  
The martyr-throbs that now in night I veil:  
And should the chill Time frown on young Desire,  
Still, still some late remorse that breast may feel,  
And heave a tardy sigh, ere love with life expire.

## SONNET X

*Quando fra l' altre donne ad ora ad ora*

When Love, whose proper throne is that sweet face,  
At times escorts her 'mid the sisters fair,  
As their each beauty is than hers less rare,  
So swells in me the fond desire apace.  
I bless the hour, the season and the place,  
So high and heavenward when my eyes could dare;  
And say: "My heart, in grateful memory bear  
This lofty honor and surpassing grace.  
From her descends the tender truthful thought,  
Which follow'd, bliss supreme shall thee repay,  
Who spurn'st the vanities that win the crowd:  
From her that gentle graceful love is caught,  
To heaven which leads thee by the right-hand way,  
And crowns e'en here with hopes both pure and proud."

## SONNET XI

*Io mi rivolgo indietro a ciascun passo*

I look behind each step I onward trace,  
Scarce able to support my wearied frame,  
Ah, wretched me! I pantingly exclaim,  
And from her atmosphere new strength embrace;  
I think on her I leave—my heart's best grace—  
My lengthen'd journey—life's capricious flame—  
I pause in withering fear, with purpose tame,  
While down my cheek tears quick each other chase  
My doubting heart thus questions in my grief:  
"Whence comes it that existence thou canst know  
When from thy spirit thou dost dwell entire?"  
Love, holy Love, my heart then answers brief:  
"Such privilege I do on all bestow  
Who feed my flame with nought of earthly fire!"

## SONNET XII

*Movesi 'l vecchierel canuto e bianco*

The palmer bent, with locks of silver gray,  
Quits the sweet spot where he has pass'd his years,  
Quits his poor family, whose anxious fears  
Paint the loved father fainting on his way;  
And trembling, on his aged limbs slow borne,  
In these last days that close his earthly course,  
He, in his soul's strong purpose, finds new force,  
Though weak with age, though by long travel worn:  
Thus reaching Rome, led on by pious love,  
He seeks the image of that Saviour Lord  
Whom soon he hopes to meet in bliss above.  
So, oft in other forms I seek to trace  
Some charm that to my heart may yet afford  
A faint resemblance of thy matchless grace.

## SONNET XIII

*Piovanmi amare lagrime dal viso*

Down my cheeks bitter tears incessant rain,  
And my heart struggles with convulsive sighs,  
When, Laura, upon you I turn my eyes,  
For whom the world's allurements I disdain.  
But when I see that gentle smile again,  
That modest, sweet, and tender smile, arise,  
It pours on every sense a blest surprise;  
Lost in delight is all my torturing pain.  
Too soon this heavenly transport sinks and dies.  
When all thy soothing charms my fate removes  
At thy departure from my ravish'd view,  
To that sole refuge its firm faith approves  
My spirit from my ravish'd bosom flies,  
And wing'd with fond remembrance follows you.

## SONNET XIV

*Quand' io son tutto volto in quella parte*

When I reflect and turn me to that part  
Whence my sweet lady beamed in purest light,  
And in my inmost thought remains that light  
Which burns me and consumes in every part,  
I, who yet dread lest from my heart it part,  
And see at hand the end of this my light,  
Go lonely, like a man deprived of light,  
Ignorant where to go; whence to depart.  
Thus flee I from the stroke that lays me dead,  
Yet flee not with such speed but that desire  
Follows, companion of my flight alone.  
Silent I go; but these my words, though dead,  
Others would cause to weep—this I desire,  
That I may weep and waste myself alone.

## SONNET XV

*Son animali al mondo di sì altera*

Creatures there are in life of such keen sight  
That no defense they need from noonday sun,  
And others dazzled by excess of light  
Who issue not abroad till day is done,  
And, with weak fondness, some because 'tis bright,  
Who in the death-flame for enjoyment run,  
Thus proving theirs a different virtue quite.  
Alas! of this last kind myself am one;  
For, of this fair the splendor to regard,  
I am but weak and ill, against late hours  
And darkness gath'ring round, myself to ward.  
Wherefore, with tearful eyes of failing powers,  
My destiny condemns me still to turn  
Where following faster I but fiercer burn.

## SONNET XVI

*Vergognando talor ch' ancor si taccia*

Ashamed sometimes thy beauties should remain  
As yet unsung, sweet lady, in my rhyme;  
When first I saw thee I recall the time,  
Pleasing as none shall ever please again.  
But no fit polish can my verse attain,  
Not mine is strength to try the task sublime;  
My genius, measuring its power to climb,  
From such attempt doth prudently refrain.  
Full oft I oped my lips to chant thy name;  
Then in mid utterance the lay was lost.  
But say what muse can dare so bold a flight?  
Full oft I strove in measure to indite;  
But ah, the pen, the hand, the vein I boast,  
At once were vanquish'd by the mighty theme!

## SONNET XVII

*Mille fiate, o dolce mia guerrera*

A thousand times, sweet warrior, have I tried,  
Proffering my heart to thee, some peace to gain  
From those bright eyes, but still, alas! in vain,  
To such low level stoops not thy chaste pride.  
If others seek the love thus thrown aside,  
Vain were their hopes and labors to obtain;  
The heart thou spurnest I alike disdain,  
To thee displeasing, 'tis by me denied.  
But if, discarded thus, it find not thee  
Its joyous exile willing to befriend,  
Alone, untaught at others' will to wend,  
Soon from life's weary burden will it flee.  
How heavy then the guilt to both, but more  
To thee, for thee it did the most adore.

## SONNET XVIII

*Quest' anima gentil che si diparte*

That graceful soul, in mercy call'd away  
Before her time to bid the world farewell,  
If welcomed as she ought in the realms of day,  
In heaven's most blessed regions sure shall dwell.  
There between Mars and Venus if she stay,  
Her sight the brightness of the sun will quell,  
Because, her infinite beauty to survey,  
The spirits of the blest will round her swell.  
If she decide upon the fourth fair nest  
Each of the three to dwindle will begin,  
And she alone the fame of beauty win,  
Nor e'en in the fifth circle may she rest;  
Thence higher if she soar, I surely trust  
Jove with all other stars in darkness will be thrust.

## SONNET XIX

*Quanto più m' avvicino al giorno estremo*

Near and more near as life's last period draws,  
Which oft is hurried on by human woe,  
I see the passing hours more swiftly flow,  
And all my hopes in disappointment close.  
And to my heart I say, amidst its throes,  
"Not long shall we discourse of love below;  
For this my earthly load, like new-fall'n snow  
Fast melting, soon shall leave us to repose.  
With it will sink in dust each towering hope,  
Cherish'd so long within my faithful breast;  
No more shall we resent, fear, smile, complain:  
Then shall we clearly trace why some are blest,  
Through deepest misery raised to Fortune's top,  
And why so many sighs so oft are heaved in vain."

## SONNET XX

*Già fiammeggiava l' amorosa stella*

Throughout the orient now began to flame  
The star of love; while o'er the northern sky  
That, which has oft raised Juno's jealousy,  
Pour'd forth its beauteous scintillating beam:  
Beside her kindled hearth the housewife dame,  
Half-dress'd, and slipshod, 'gan her distaff ply:  
And now the wonted hour of woe drew nigh,  
That wakes to tears the lover from his dream:  
When my sweet hope unto my mind appear'd,  
Not in the custom'd way unto my sight;  
For grief had bathed my lids, and sleep had weigh'd;  
Ah me, how changed that form by love endear'd!  
"Why lose thy fortitude?" methought she said,  
"These eyes not yet from thee withdraw their light."

## SONNET XXI

*Apollo, s' ancor vive il bel desio*

O Phœbus, if that fond desire remains,  
Which fired thy breast near the Thessalian wave;  
If those bright tresses, which such pleasure gave,  
Through lapse of years thy memory not disdains;  
From sluggish frosts, from rude inclement rains,  
Which last the while thy beams our region leave,  
That honored sacred tree from peril save,  
Whose name of dear accordance waked our pains!  
And, by that amorous hope which soothed thy care,  
What time expectant thou wert doom'd to sigh  
Dispel those vapors which disturb our sky!  
So shall we both behold our favorite fair  
With wonder, seated on the grassy mead,  
And forming with her arms herself a shade.

## SONNET XXII

*Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi*

Alone, and lost in thought, the desert glade  
Measuring I roam with ling'ring steps and slow;  
And still a watchful glance around me throw,  
Anxious to shun the print of human tread:  
No other means I find, no surer aid  
From the world's prying eye to hide my woe:  
So well my wild disorder'd gestures show,  
And love-lorn looks, the fire within me bred,  
That well I deem each mountain, wood and plain,  
And river knows, what I from man conceal,  
What dreary hues my life's fond prospects dim.  
Yet whate'er wild or savage paths I've ta'en,  
Where'er I wander, Love attends me still,  
Soft whisp'ring to my soul, and I to him.



## SONNET XXIII

*S' io credessi per morte essere scarco*

Oh! had I deem'd that Death would free my soul  
From Love's tormenting, overwhelming thought,  
To crush its aching burthen I had sought,  
My wearied life had hasten'd to its goal;  
My shivering bark yet fear'd another shoal,  
To find one tempest with another bought,  
Thus poised 'twixt earth and heaven I dwell as naught,  
Not daring to assume my life's control.  
But sure 'tis time that Death's relentless bow  
Had wing'd that fatal arrow to my heart,  
So often bathed in life's dark crimson tide:  
But though I crave he would this boon bestow,  
He to my cheek his impress doth impart,  
And still o'erlooks me in his fearful stride.

## SONNET XXIV

*Orso, e' non furon mai fiumi nè stagni*

Orso, my friend, was never stream, nor lake,  
Nor sea in whose broad lap all rivers fall,  
Nor shadow of high hill, or wood, or wall,  
Nor heaven-obscuring clouds which torrents make,  
Nor other obstacles my grief so wake,  
Whatever most that lovely face may pall,  
As hiding the bright eyes which me enthrall,  
That veil which bids my heart "Now burn or break,"  
And, whether by humility or pride,  
Their glance, extinguishing mine every joy,  
Conducts me prematurely to my tomb;  
Also my soul by one fair hand is tried,  
Cunning and careful ever to annoy,  
'Gainst my poor eyes a rock that has become.

## SONNET XXV

*Io temo sì de' begli occhi l' assalto*

So much I fear to encounter her bright eye,  
Alway in which my death and Love reside,  
That, as a child the rod, its glance I fly,  
Though long the time has been since first I tried;  
And ever since, so wearisome or high,  
No place has been where strong will has not hied,  
Her shunning, at whose sight my senses die,  
And, cold as marble, I am laid aside:  
Wherefore if I return to see you late,  
Sure 'tis no fault unworthy of excuse,  
That from my death awhile I held aloof  
At all to turn to what men shun, their fate,  
And from such fear my harass'd heart to loose,  
Of its true faith are ample pledge and proof.

## SONNET XXVI

*Quando dal proprio sito si remove*

When from its proper soil the tree is moved  
Which Phœbus loved erewhile in human form,  
Grim Vulcan at his labor sighs and sweats,  
Renewing ever the dread bolts of Jove,  
Who thunder now, now speaks in snow and rain,  
Nor Julius honoreth than Janus more:  
Earth moans, and far from us the sun retires  
Since his dear mistress here no more is seen.  
Then Mars and Saturn, cruel stars, resume  
Their hostile rage: Orion arm'd with clouds  
The helm and sails of storm-tost seamen breaks.  
To Neptune and to Juno and to us  
Vext Æolus proves his power, and makes us feel  
How parts the fair face angels long expect.

## SONNET XXVII

*Ma poi che 'l dolce riso umile e piano*

But when her sweet smile, modest and benign,  
No longer hides from us its beauties rare,  
At the spent forge his stout and sinewy arms  
Plieth that old Sicilian smith in vain,  
For from the hands of Jove his bolts are taken  
Temper'd in Ætna to extremest proof;  
And his cold sister by degrees grows calm  
And genial in Apollo's kindling beams.  
Moves from the rosy west a summer breath,  
Which safe and easy wafts the seaward bark,  
And wakes the sweet flowers in each grassy mead.  
Malignant stars on every side depart,  
Dispersed before that bright enchanting face  
For which already many tears are shed.

## SONNET XXVIII

*Il figliuol di Latona avca già nove*

Nine times already had Latona's son  
Look'd from the highest balcony of heaven  
For her who whilom waked his sighs in vain,  
And sighs as vain now wakes in other breasts;  
Then seeking wearily, nor knowing where  
She dwelt, or far or near, and why delayed,  
He showed himself to us as one insane  
For grief, who cannot find some loved lost thing:  
And thus, for clouds of sorrow held aloof,  
Saw not the fair face turn, which, if I live,  
In many a page shall praised and honored be.  
The misery of her loss so changed her mien  
That her bright eyes were dimm'd, for once, with tears,  
Thereon its former gloom the air resumed.

## SONNET XXIX

*Quel che 'n Tessaglia ebbe le man sì pronte*

He who for empire at Pharsalia threw,  
Reddening its beauteous plain with civil gore,  
As Pompey's corse his conquering soldiers bore,  
Wept when the well-known features met his view;  
The shepherd youth, who fierce Goliath slew,  
Had long rebellious children to deplore,  
And bent, in generous grief, the brave Saul o'er  
His shame and fall when proud Gilboa knew;  
But you, whose cheek with pity never paled,  
Who still have shields at hand to guard you well  
Against Love's bow, which shoots its darts in vain,  
Behold me by a thousand deaths assail'd,  
And yet no tears of thine compassion tell,  
But in those bright eyes anger and disdain.

## SONNET XXX

*Il mio avversario, in cui veder solete*

My mirror'd foe reflects, alas! so fair  
Those eyes which Heaven and Love have honored too!  
Yet not his charms thou dost enamor'd view,  
But all thine own, and they beyond compare.  
O lady! thou hast chased me at its prayer  
From thy heart's throne, where I so fondly grew.  
O wretched exile! though too well I knew  
A reign with thee I were unfit to share.  
But were I ever fixed thy bosom's mate,  
A flattering mirror should not me supplant,  
And make thee scorn me in thy self-delight;  
Thou surely must recall Narcissus' fate,  
But if like him thy doom should thee enchant,  
What mead more worthy of a flower so bright?

## SONNET XXXI

*L' oro e le perle, e i fior vermigli e i bianchi*

Those golden tresses, teeth of pearly white,  
Those cheeks' fair roses blooming to decay,  
Do in their beauty to my soul convey  
The poison'd arrows from my aching sight.  
Thus sad and briefly must my days take flight,  
For life with woe not long on earth will stay;  
But more I blame that mirror's flattering sway,  
Which thou hast wearied with thy self-delight.  
Its power my bosom's sovereign too hath stilled,  
Who prayed thee in my suit—now he is mute,  
Since thou art captured by thyself alone:  
Death's seeds it hath within my heart instilled,  
For Lethe's stream its form doth constitute,  
And makes thee lose each image but thine own.

## SONNET XXXII

*Io sentia dentr' al cor già venir meno*

Because the powers that take their life from you  
Already had I felt within decay,  
And because Nature, death to shield or slay,  
Arms every animal with instinct true,  
To my long-curb'd desire the rein I threw,  
And turn'd it in the old forgotten way,  
Where fondly it invites me night and day,  
Though, 'gainst its will, another I pursue,  
And thus it led me back, ashamed and slow,  
To see those eyes with love's own luster rife  
Which I am watchful never to offend:  
Thus may I live perchance awhile below;  
One glance of yours such power has o'er my life  
Which sure, if I oppose desire, shall end.

## SONNET XXXIII

*Se mas foco per foco non si spense*

If fire was never yet by fire subdued,  
If never flood fell dry by frequent rain,  
But, like to like, if each by other gain,  
And contraries are often mutual food;  
Love, who our thoughts controllest in each mood,  
Through whom two bodies thus one soul sustain,  
How, why in her, with such unusual strain  
Make the want less by wishes long renewed?  
Perchance, as falleth the broad Nile from high,  
Deafening with his great voice all nature round,  
And as the sun still dazzles the fix'd eye,  
So with itself desire in discord found  
Loses in its impetuous object force,  
As the too frequent spur oft checks the course.

## SONNET XXXIV

*Perch' io t' abbia guardato di menzogna*

With all my power, lest falsehood should invade,  
I guarded thee and still thy honor sought,  
Ungrateful tongue! who honor ne'er hast brought,  
But still my care with rage and shame repaid;  
For, though to me most requisite, thine aid,  
When mercy I would ask, availeth nought,  
Still cold and mute, and e'en to words if wrought  
They seem as sounds in sleep by dreamers made.  
And ye, sad tears, o' nights, when I would fain  
Be left alone, my sure companions, flow,  
But, summon'd for my peace, ye soon depart;  
Ye too, mine anguish'd sighs, so prompt to pain,  
Then breathe before her brokenly and slow,  
And my face only speaks my suffering heart.

## SONNET XXXV

*Poco era ad appressarsi agli occhi miei*

Had but the light that dazzled them afar  
Drawn but a little nearer to mine eyes,  
Methinks I would have wholly changed my form,  
Even as in Thessaly her form she changed:  
But if I cannot lose myself in her  
More than I have—small mercy though it won—  
I would to-day in aspect thoughtful be,  
Of harder stone than chisel ever wrought,  
Of adamant, or marble cold and white,  
Perchance through terror, or of jasper rare  
And therefore prized by the blind greedy crowd.  
Then were I free from this hard heavy yoke  
Which makes me envy Atlas, old and worn,  
Who with his shoulders brings Morocco night.

## SONNET XXXVI

*Se col sieco desir che 'l cor distrugge*

Counting the hours, lest I myself mislead  
By blind desire wherewith my heart is torn,  
E'en while I speak away the moments speed,  
To me and pity which alike were sworn.  
What shade so cruel as to blight the seed  
Whence the wish'd fruitage should so soon be born?  
What beast within my fold has leap'd to feed?  
What wall is built between the hand and corn?  
Alas! I know not, but, if right I guess,  
Love to such joyful hope has only led  
To plunge my weary life in worse distress;  
And I remember now what once I read,  
Until the moment of his full release  
Man's bliss begins not, nor his troubles cease.

## SONNET XXXVII

*Mie venture al venir son tarde e pigre*

Late to arrive my fortunes are and slow—  
Hopes are unsure, desires ascend and swell,  
Suspense, expectancy in me rebel—  
But swifter to depart than tigers go.  
Tepid and dark shall be the cold pure snow,  
The ocean dry, its fish on mountains dwell,  
The sun set in the East, by that old well  
Alike whence Tigris and Euphrates flow,  
Ere in this strife I peace or truce shall find,  
Ere Love or Laura practise kinder ways,  
Sworn friends, against me wrongfully combined.  
After such bitters, if some sweet allays,  
Balked by long fasts my palate spurns the fare,  
Sole grace from them that falleth to my share.

## SONNET XXXVIII

*L' arbor gentil che forte amai moll' anni*

The graceful tree I loved so long and well,  
Ere its fair boughs in scorn my flame declined,  
Beneath its shade encouraged my poor mind  
To bud and bloom, and 'mid its sorrow swell.  
But now, my heart secure from such a spell,  
Alas, from friendly it has grown unkind!  
My thoughts entirely to one end confined,  
Their painful sufferings how I still may tell.  
What should he say, the sighing slave of love,  
To whom my later rhymes gave hope of bliss,  
Who for that laurel has lost all—but this?  
May poet never pluck thee more, nor Jove  
Exempt; but may the sun still hold in hate  
On each green leaf till blight and blackness wait.



## SONNET XXXIX

*Benedetto sia 'l giorno e 'l mese e l' anno*

Blest be the year, the month, the hour, the day,  
The season and the time, and point of space,  
And blest the beauteous country and the place  
Where first of two bright eyes I felt the sway;  
Blest the sweet pain of which I was the prey,  
When newly doom'd Love's sovereign law to embrace  
And blest the bow and shaft to which I trace  
The wound that to my inmost heart found way;  
Blest be the ceaseless accents of my tongue,  
Unwearied breathing my loved lady's name;  
Blest my fond wishes, sighs, and tears, and pains:  
Blest be the lays in which her praise I sung,  
That on all sides acquired for her fair fame,  
And blest my thoughts! for o'er them all she reigns.

## SONNET XL

*Padre del ciel, dopo i perduti giorni*

Father of heaven! after the days misspent,  
After the nights of wild tumultuous thought,  
In that fierce passion's strong entanglement  
One, for my peace too lovely fair, had wrought;  
Vouchsafe that, by thy grace, my spirit, bent  
On nobler aims, to holier ways be brought;  
That so my foe, spreading with dark intent  
His mortal snares, be foil'd, and held at nought.  
E'en now the eleventh year its course fulfils,  
That I have bowed me to the tyranny  
Relentless most to fealty most tried.  
Have mercy, Lord! on my unworthy ills;  
Fix all my thoughts in contemplation high,  
How on the cross this day a Saviour died.

## SONNET XLI

*Se voi potete per turbati segni*

If, but by angry and disdainful sign,  
By the averted head and downcast sight,  
By readiness beyond thy sex for flight,  
Deaf to all pure and worthy prayers of mine,  
Thou canst, by these or other arts of thine,  
'Scape from my breast—where Love on slip so slight  
Grafts every day new boughs—of such despite  
A fitting cause I then might well divine;  
For gentle plant in arid soil to be  
Seems little suited; so it better were,  
And this e'en nature dictates, thence to stir.  
But since thy destiny prohibits thee  
Elsewhere to dwell, be this at least thy care  
Not always to sojourn in hatred there.

## SONNET XLII

*Lasso, che mal accorto fui da prima*

Alas! this heart by me was little known  
In those first days when Love its depths explored,  
Where by degrees he made himself the lord  
Of my whole life, and claim'd it as his own:  
I did not think that, through his power alone,  
A heart time-steel'd, and so with valor stored,  
Such proof of failing firmness could afford,  
And fell by wrong self-confidence o'erthrown.  
Henceforward all defense too late will come,  
Save this, to prove, enough or little, here  
If to these mortal prayers Love lend his ear.  
Not now my prayer—nor can such e'er have room—  
That with more mercy he consume my heart,  
But in the fire that she may bear her part.

## SONNET XLIII

*Del mar Tierreno alla sinistra riva*

Upon the left shore of the Tyrrhene sea,  
Where, broken by the winds, the waves complain,  
Sudden I saw that honored green again,  
Written for which so many a page must be:  
Love, ever in my soul his flame who fed,  
Drew me with memories of those tresses fair;  
Whence, in a rivulet, which silent there  
Through long grass stole, I fell, as one struck dead.  
Lone as I was, 'mid hills of oak and fir,  
I felt ashamed; to heart of gentle mould  
Blushes suffice, nor needs it other spur.  
'Tis well at least, breaking bad customs old  
To change from eyes to feet; from these so wet  
By those if milder April should be met.

## SONNET XLIV

*L' aspetto sacro della terra vostra*

The solemn aspect of this sacred shore  
Wakes for the misspent past my bitter sighs;  
"Pause, wretched man! and turn," as conscience cries,  
Pointing the heavenward way where I should soar.  
But soon another thought gets mastery o'er  
The first, that so to palter were unwise.  
E'en now the time, if memory err not, flies,  
When we should wait our lady-love before.  
I, for his aim then well I apprehend,  
Within me freeze, as one who, sudden, hears  
News unexpected which his soul offend.  
Returns my first thought then, that disappears;  
Nor know I which shall conquer, but till now  
Within me they contend, nor hope of rest allow!

## SONNET XLV

*Ben sapevo' io che natural consiglio*

Full well I know that natural wisdom nought,  
Love, 'gainst thy power, in any age prevail'd,  
For snares oft set, fond oaths that ever fail'd,  
Sore proofs of thy sharp talons long had taught;  
But lately, and in me it wonder wrought—  
With care this new experience be detail'd—  
'Tween Tuscany and Elba as I sail'd  
On the salt sea, it first my notice caught.  
I fled from thy broad hands, and, by the way,  
An unknown wanderer, 'neath the violence  
Of winds, and waves, and skies, I helpless lay,  
When, lo! thy ministers, I knew not whence,  
Who quickly made me by fresh stings to feel  
Ill who resists his fate, or would conceal.

## SONNET XLVI

*Io son gia stanco di pensor siccome*

I weary me alway with questions keen  
How, why my thoughts ne'er turn from you away,  
Wherefore in life they still prefer to stay,  
When they might flee this sad and painful scene,  
And how of fine hair, the lovely mien,  
Of the bright eyes which o'er my feelings sway,  
Calling on your dear name by night and day,  
My tongue ne'er silent in their praise has been,  
And how my feet not tender are, nor tired,  
Pursuing still with many a useless pace  
Of your fair footsteps the elastic trace;  
And whence the ink, the paper whence acquired,  
Fill'd with your memories; if in this I err,  
Not art's defect but Love's own fault it were.

## SONNET XLVII

*I begli occhi, ond' i' fui in quisa*

Not all the spells of the magician's art,  
Not potent herbs, nor travel o'er the main,  
But those sweet eyes alone can soothe my pain,  
And they which struck the blow must heal the smart;  
Those eyes from meaner love have kept my heart,  
Content one single image to retain,  
And censure but the medium wild and vain,  
If ill my words their honeyed sense impart;  
These are those beauteous eyes that never fail  
To prove Love's conquest, wheresoe'er they shine,  
Although my breast hath oftenest felt their fire;  
These are those beauteous eyes that still assail  
And penetrate my soul with sparks divine,  
So that of singing them I cannot tire.

## SONNET XLVIII

*Amor con sue promesse lusingando*

By promise fair and artful flattery  
Me love contrived in prison old to snare,  
And gave the keys to her my foe in care,  
Who in self-exile dooms me still to lie.  
Alas! his wiles I knew not until I  
Was in their power, so sharp yet sweet to bear  
(Man scarce will credit it although I swear)  
That I regain my freedom with a sigh,  
And, as true suffering captives ever do,  
Carry of my sore chains the greater part,  
And on my brow and eyes so writ my heart  
That when she witnesseth my cheek's wan hue  
A sigh shall own: if right I read his face,  
Between him and his tomb but small the space!

## SONNET XLIX

*Per mirar Policleto a prova fiso*

Had Polycletus in proud rivalry  
On her his model gazed a thousand years,  
Not half the beauty to my soul appears,  
In fatal conquest, e'er could he descry.  
But, Simon, thou wast then in heaven's blest sky,  
Ere she, my fair one, left her native spheres  
To trace a loveliness this world reveres  
Was thus thy task, from heaven's reality.  
Yes—thine the portrait heaven alone could wake,  
This clime, nor earth, such beauty could conceive,  
Where droops the spirit 'neath its earthly shrine:  
The soul's reflected grace was thine to take,  
Which not on earth thy painting could achieve.  
Where mortal limits all the powers confine.

## SONNET L

*Quando giunse a Simon l' alto concetto*

When Simon at my wish the proud design  
Conceived, which in his hand the pencil placed,  
Had he, while loveliness his picture graced,  
But added speech and mind to charms divine,  
What sighs he then had spared this breast of mine;  
That bliss had given to higher bliss distaste;  
For, when such meekness in her look was traced,  
'Twould seem she soon to kindness might incline.  
But, urging converse with the portray'd fair,  
Methinks she deigns attention to my prayer,  
Though wanting to reply the power of voice.  
What praise thyself, Pygmalion, hast thou gain'd;  
Forming that image, whence thou hast obtain'd  
A thousand times what, once obtain'd, would me rejoice.

## SONNET LI

*Se al principio risponde il fine e 'l mezzo*

If, of this fourteenth year wherein I sigh,  
The end and middle with its opening vie,  
Nor air nor shade can give me now release,  
I feel mine ardent passion so increase:  
For Love, with whom my thought no medium knows,  
Beneath whose yoke I never find repose,  
So rules me through these eyes, on mine own ill  
Too often turn'd, but half remains to kill.  
Thus, day by day, I feel me sink apace,  
And yet so secretly none else may trace,  
Save she whose glances my fond bosom tear.  
Scarcely till now this load of life I bear,  
Nor know how long with me will be her stay,  
For death draws near, and hastens life away.

## SONNET LII

*Io son sì stanco sotto 'l fascio antico*

Evil by custom, as by nature frail,  
I am so wearied with the long disgrace,  
That much I dread my fainting in the race  
Should let th' original enemy prevail.  
Once an Eternal Friend, that heard my cries,  
Came to my rescue, glorious in His might,  
Arm'd with all-conquering love, then took his flight,  
That I in vain pursued Him with my eyes.  
But His dear words, still sounding, sweetly say,  
"O ye that faint with travel, see the way!  
Hopeless of other refuge, come to me."  
What grace, what kindness, or what destiny  
Will give me wings, as the fair-feather'd dove,  
To raise me hence and seek my rest above?

## SONNET LIH

*Io non fu' d' amar voi lassato unquanco*

Weary I never was, nor can be e'er,  
Lady, while life shall last, of loving you,  
But brought, alas! myself in hate to view,  
Perpetual tears have bred a blank despair:  
I wish a tomb, whose marble fine and fair,  
When this tired spirit and frail flesh are two,  
May show your name, to which my death is due,  
If e'en our names at last one stone may share;  
Wherefore, if full of faith and love, a heart  
Can, of worst torture short, suffice your hate,  
Mercy at length may visit e'en my smart.  
If otherwise your wrath itself would sate,  
It is deceived; and none will credit show;  
To Love and to myself my thanks for this I owe.

## SONNET LIV

*Se blanche non son prima ambe le temple*

Till silver'd o'er by age my temples grow,  
Where Time by slow degrees now plants his gray,  
Safe shall I never be, in danger's way,  
While Love still points and plies his fatal bow.  
I fear no more his tortures and his tricks,  
That he will keep me further to ensnare  
Nor ope my heart, that, from without, he there  
His poisonous and ruthless shafts may fix.  
No tears can now find issue from mine eyes,  
But the way there so well they know to win,  
That nothing now the pass to them denies.  
Though the fierce ray rekindle me within,  
It burns not all; her cruel and severe  
Form may disturb, not break my slumbers here.



## SONNET LV

## THE POET AND HIS EYES

*Occhi, piangete; accompagnate il core*

- P. Weep, wretched eyes, accompany the heart  
Which only from your weakness death sustains.
- E. Weep? evermore we weep; with keener pains  
For others' error than our own we smart.
- P. Love, entering first through you an easy part,  
Took up his seat, where now supreme he reigns.
- E. We oped to him the way, but Hope the veins  
First fired of him now stricken by death's dart.
- P. The lots, as seems to you, scarce equal fall  
'Tween heart and eyes, for you, at first sight, were  
Enamored of your common ill and shame.
- E. This is the thought that grieves us most of all;  
For perfect judgments are on earth so rare  
That one man's fault is oft another's blame.

## SONNET LVI

*Io amai sempre, ed amo forte ancora*

I always loved, I love sincerely yet,  
And to love more from day to day shall learn,  
The charming spot where oft in grief I turn  
When Love's severities my bosom fret;  
My mind to love the time and hour is set  
Which taught it each low care aside to spurn;  
She too, of loveliest face, for whom I burn,  
Bids me her fair life love and sin forget.  
Who ever thought to see in friendship join'd,  
On all sides with my suffering heart to cope,  
The gentle enemies I love so well?  
Love now is paramount my heart to bind,  
And, save that with desire increases hope,  
Dead should I lie alive where I would dwell.

## SONNET LVII

*Io avrò sempre in odio la fenestra*

Always in hate the window shall I bear,  
Whence Love has shot on me his shafts at will,  
Because not one of them sufficed to kill;  
For death is good when life is bright and fair;  
But in this earthly jail its term to outwear  
Is cause to me, alas! of infinite ill;  
And mine is worse because immortal still,  
Since from the heart the spirit may not tear.  
Wretched! ere this who surely ought'st to know  
By long experience, from his onward course  
None can stay Time by flattery or by force.  
Oft and again have I address'd it so:  
Mourner, away! he parteth not too soon  
Who leaves behind him far his life's calm June.

## SONNET LVIII

*Sì tosto come avven che 'l arco scocchi*

Instantly a good archer draws his bow  
Small skill it needs, e'en from afar, to see  
Which shaft less fortunate, despised may be,  
Which to its destined sign will certain go.  
Lady, e'en thus of your bright eyes the blow,  
You surely felt pass straight and deep in me,  
Searching my life, whence—such is fate's decree—  
Eternal tears my stricken heart o'erflow;  
And well I know e'en then your pity said:  
Fond wretch! to misery whom passion leads,  
Be this the point at once to strike him dead.  
But seeing now how sorrow sorrow breeds,  
All that my cruel foes against me plot,  
For my worse pain, and for my death is not.

## SONNET LIX

*Poi che mia speme è lunga a venir troppo*

Since my hope's fruit still faileth to arrive,  
And short the space vouchsafed me to survive,  
Betimes of this aware I fain would be,  
Swifter than light or wind from Love to flee:  
And I do flee him, weak albeit and lame  
O' my left side, where passion racked my frame.  
Though now secure yet bear I on my face  
Of the amorous encounter signal trace.  
Wherefore I counsel each this way who comes,  
Turn hence your footsteps, and, if Love consumes,  
Think not in present pain his worst is done;  
For, though I live, of thousand 'scapes not one!  
'Gainst Love my enemy was strong indeed—  
Lo! from his wounds e'en she is doom'd to bleed.

## SONNET LX

*Fuggendo la prigione ov' Amor m' ebbe*

Fleeing the prison that had long detained,  
Where Love dealt with me as to him seemed well,  
Ladies, the time were long indeed to tell,  
How much my heart its new-found freedom pained  
I felt within I could not, so bereaved,  
Live e'en a day; and, midway, on my eyes  
That traitor rose in so complete disguise,  
A wiser than myself had been deceived.  
Whence oft I've said, deep sighing for the past,  
Alas! the yoke and chains of old to me  
Were sweeter far than thus released to be.  
Me wretched! but to learn mine ill at last;  
With what sore trial must I now forget  
Errors that round my path myself have set.

## SONNET LXI

*Erano i capei d' oro all' aura sparsi*

Her golden tresses on the wind she threw,  
Which twisted them in many a beauteous braid;  
In her fine eyes the burning glances play'd,  
With lovely light, which now they seldom show:  
Ah! then it seem'd her face wore pity's hue,  
Yet haply fancy my fond sense betray'd;  
Nor strange that I, in whose warm heart was laid  
Love's fuel, suddenly enkindled grew!  
Not like a mortal's did her step appear,  
Angelic was her form; her voice, methought,  
Pour'd more than human accents on the ear.  
A living sun was what my vision caught,  
A spirit pure; and though not such still found,  
Unbending of the bow ne'er heals the wound.

## SONNET LXII

*Più volte Amor m' avea già detto scrivi*

Write—to my heart Love oftentimes had said—  
Write what thou seest in letters large of gold,  
That livid are my votaries to behold,  
And in a moment made alive and dead.  
Once in thy heart my sovran influence spread  
A public precedent to lovers told;  
Though other duties drew thee from my fold,  
I soon reclaim'd thee as thy footsteps fled.  
And if the bright eyes that I show'd thee first,  
If the fair face where most I loved to stay,  
Thy young heart's icy hardness when I burst,  
Restore to me the bow that all obey,  
Then may thy cheek, which now so smooth appears,  
Be channell'd with my daily drink of tears

## SONNET LXIII

*Quando giunge per gli occhi al cor profondo*

When reaches through the eyes the conscious heart  
Its imaged fate, all other thoughts depart;  
The powers that from the soul their functions take  
A dead weight on the frame its limbs then make.  
From the first miracle a second springs,  
At times the banish'd faculty that brings,  
So fleeing from itself, to some new seat,  
Which feeds revenge and makes e'en exile sweet.  
Thus in both faces the pale tints were rife,  
Because the strength that gave the glow of life  
On neither side was where it wont to dwell—  
I on that day these things remember'd well,  
Of that fond couple when each varying mien  
Told me in like estate what long myself had been.

## SONNET LXIV

*Cost' potess' io ben chiuider in versi*

Could I, in melting verse, my thoughts but throw,  
As in my heart their living load I bear,  
No soul so cruel in the world was e'er  
That would not at the tale with pity glow.  
But ye, blest eyes, which dealt me the sore blow,  
'Gainst which nor helm nor shield availed to spare  
Within, without, behold me poor and bare,  
Though never in laments is breathed my woe.  
But since on me your bright glance ever shines,  
E'en as a sunbeam through transparent glass,  
Suffice then the desire without the lines.  
Faith Peter blessed and Mary, but, alas!  
It proves an enemy to me alone,  
Whose spirit save by you to none is known.

## SONNET LXV

*Io son dell' aspettar omai sì vinto*

Weary with expectation's endless round,  
And overcome in this long war of sighs,  
I hold desires in hate and hopes despise,  
And every tie wherewith my breast is bound;  
But the bright face that in my heart profound  
Is stamp'd, and seen where'er I turn mine eyes,  
Compels me where, against my will, arise  
The same sharp pains that first my ruin crowned.  
Then was my error when the old way quite  
Of liberty was banned and barred to me.  
He follows ill who pleases but his sight;  
To its own harm my soul ran wild and free,  
Now doomed at others' will to wait and wend,  
Because that once it ventured to offend.

## SONNET LXVI

*Ahi, bella libertà, come tu m' hai*

Alas, sweet Liberty; in speeding hence,  
Too well didst thou reveal unto my heart  
Its careless joy, ere Love ensheathed his dart,  
Of whose dread wound I ne'er can lose the sense.  
My eyes, enamor'd of their grief intense,  
Did in that hour from Reason's bridle start;  
Thus used to woe, they have no wish to part;  
Each other mortal work is an offense.  
No other theme will now my soul content  
Than she who plants my death, with whose blest name  
I make the air resound in echoes sweet:  
Love spurs me to her as his only bent,  
My hand can trace nought other but her fame,  
No other spot attracts my willing feet.

## SONNET LXVII

*Quella fenestra, ove l' un sol si vede*

That window where my sun is often seen  
Refulgent, and the world's at morning's hours;  
And that where Boreas blows, when winter lowers,  
And the short days reveal a clouded scene;  
That bench of stone where, with a pensive mien,  
My Laura sits, forgetting beauty's powers;  
Haunts where her shadow strikes the walls of flowers  
And her feet press the paths or herbage green:  
The place where Love assail'd me with success;  
And spring, the fatal time that, first observed,  
Revives the keen remembrance every year;  
With looks and words, that o'er me have preserved  
A power no length of time can render less—  
Call to my eyes the sadly-soothing tear.

## SONNET LXVIII

*Lassol ben so che dolorose prede*

Alas! I know death makes us all his prey,  
Nor aught of mercy shows to destined man;  
How swift the world completes its circling span,  
And faithless Time soon speeds him on his way.  
My heart repeats the blast of earth's last day,  
Yet for its grief no recompense can scan,  
Love holds me still beneath its cruel ban,  
And still my eyes their usual tribute pay.  
My watchful senses mark how on their wing  
The circling years transport their fleeter kin,  
And still I bow enslaved as by a spell:  
For fourteen years did reason proudly fling  
Defiance at my tameless will, to win  
A triumph blest, if Man can good foretell.

## SONNET LXIX

*Cesare, poi che 'l traditor d' Egitto*

When Egypt's traitor Pompey's honored head  
To Cæsar sent; then, records so relate,  
To shroud a gladness manifestly great,  
Some feigned tears the specious monarch shed;  
And, when misfortune her dark mantle spread  
O'er Hannibal, and his afflicted state,  
He laugh'd 'midst those who wept their adverse fate,  
That rank despite to wreak defeat had bred.  
Thus doth the mind oft variously conceal  
Its several passions by a different veil;  
Now with a countenance that's sad, now gay:  
So mirth and song if sometimes I employ,  
'Tis but to hide those sorrows that annoy,  
'Tis but to chase my amorous cares away.

## SONNET LXX

*Non veggio ove scampar mi possa omai*

No hope of respite, of escape no way,  
Her bright eyes wage such constant havoc here;  
Alas! excess of tyranny, I fear,  
My doting heart, which ne'er has truce, will slay.  
Fain would I flee, but ah! their amorous ray,  
Which day and night on memory rises clear,  
Shines with such power, in this the fifteenth year,  
They dazzle more than in love's early day.  
So wide and far their images are spread  
That wheresoe'er I turn I always see  
Her, or some sister-light on hers that fed.  
Springs such a wood from one fair laurel tree,  
That my old foe, with admirable skill,  
Amid its boughs misleads me at his will.



## SONNET LXXI

*Avventuroso più d' altro terreno*

Love first beheld my condescending fair—  
Ah, happiest spot on earth—in this sweet place  
Retard her steps, to smile with courteous grace  
On me, and smiling glad the ambient air.  
The deep-cut image, wrought with skilful care,  
Time shall from hardest adamant efface,  
Ere from my mind that smile it shall erase,  
Dear to my soul! which memory planted there.  
Oft as I view thee, heart-enchancing soil!  
With amorous awe I'll seek—delightful toil!—  
Where still some traces of her footsteps lie.  
And if fond Love still warms her generous breast,  
Whene'er you see her, gentle friend, request  
The tender tribute of a tear—a sigh.

## SONNET LXXII

*Lasso! quante fiate Amor m' assale*

Alas! how ceaselessly is urged Love's claim;  
By day, by night, a thousand times I turn  
Where best I may behold the dear lights burn  
That have immortalized my bosom's flame.  
Thus grow I calm, and to such state am brought,  
At noon, at break of day, at vesper-bell,  
I find them in my mind so tranquil dwell,  
I neither think nor care beside for aught  
The balmy air, which, from her angel mien,  
Moves ever with her winning words and wise,  
Makes wheresoe'er she breathes a sweet serene.  
As 'twere a gentle spirit from the skies,  
Still in these scenes some comfort brings to me,  
Nor elsewhere breathes my harass'd heart so free.

## SONNET LXXIII

*Persequendomi Amor al luogo suato*

As Love his arts in haunts familiar tried,  
Watchful as one expecting war is found,  
Who all foresees and guards the passes round,  
I on the armor of old thoughts relied.  
Turning, I saw a shadow at my side  
Cast by the sun, whose outline on the ground  
I knew for hers, who, be my judgment sound,  
Deserves in bliss immortal to abide.  
I whisper'd to my heart, Nay, wherefore fear?  
But scarcely did the thought arise within  
Ere the bright rays in which I burn were here.  
As thunders with the lightning-flash begin,  
So was I struck at once both blind and mute,  
By her dear dazzling eyes and sweet salute.

## SONNET LXXIV

*La donna che 'l mio cor nel viso porta*

She, in her face who doth my gone heart wear,  
As lone I sate 'mid love-thoughts dear and true,  
Appeared before me. To show honor due,  
I rose, with pallid brow and reverent air.  
Soon as of such my state she was aware,  
She turn'd on me with look so soft and new  
As, in Jove's greatest fury, might subdue  
His rage, and from his hand the thunders tear.  
I started—on her farther way she pass'd  
Graceful, and speaking words I could not brook,  
Nor of her lustrous eyes the loving look.  
When on that dear salute my thoughts are cast,  
So rich and varied do my pleasures flow,  
No pain I feel, nor evil fear below.

## SONNET LXXV

*Sennuccio, s' vo' che sappi in qual maniera*

Alas, Sennuccio! would thy mind could frame  
What now I suffer! what my life's drear reign:  
Consumed beneath my heart's continued pain,  
At will she guides me, yet am I the same.  
Now humble—then doth pride her soul inflame;  
Now harsh—then gentle; cruel—kind again;  
Now all reserve—then borne on frolic's vein;  
Disdain alternates with a milder claim.  
Here once she sat, and there so sweetly sang;  
Here turn'd to look on me, and lingering stood;  
There first her beauteous eyes my spirit stole;  
And here she smiled, and there her accents rang;  
Her speaking face here told another mood.  
Thus Love, our sovereign, holds me in control.

## SONNET LXXVI

*Qui dove mezzo son, Sennuccio mio*

Friend, on this spot, I life but half endure  
(Would I were wholly here, and you content),  
Where from the storm and wind my course I bent,  
Which suddenly had left the skies obscure  
Fain would I tell—for here I feel me sure—  
Why lightnings now no fear to me present;  
And why unmitigated, much less spent,  
E'en as before my fierce desires allure.  
Soon as I reach'd these realms of love, and saw  
Where, sweet and pure, to life my Laura came,  
Who calms the air, at rest the thunder lays,  
Love in my soul, where she alone gives law,  
Quench'd the cold fear and kindled the fast flame;  
What were it then on her bright eyes to gaze!

## SONNET LXXVII

*Dell' empia Babilonia, ond' è fuggita*

Yes, out of impious Babylon I'm flown,  
Whence flown all shame, whence banished is all good,  
That nurse of error, and of guilt the abode,  
To lengthen out a life that else were gone.  
There as Love prompts, while wandering alone,  
I now a garland weave, and now an ode;  
With him I commune, and in pensive mood  
Hope better times; this only checks my moan.  
Nor for the throng, nor fortune do I care,  
Nor for myself, nor sublunary things,  
No ardor outwardly or inly springs:  
I ask two persons only: let my fair  
For me a kind and tender heart maintain;  
And be my friend secure in his high post again.

## SONNET LXXVIII

*In mezzo di duo amanti onesta altera*

'Tween two fond lovers I a lady spied,  
Virtuous but haughty, and with her that lord,  
By gods above and men below adored—  
The sun on this, myself upon that side—  
Soon as she found herself the sphere denied  
Of her bright friend, on my fond eyes she poured  
A flood of life and joy, which hope restored.  
Less cold to me will be her future pride.  
Suddenly changed itself to cordial mirth  
The jealous fear to which at his first sight  
So high a rival in my heart gave birth;  
As suddenly his sad and rueful plight  
From further scrutiny a small cloud veiled,  
So much it ruffled him that then he failed.

## SONNET LXXIX

*Pien di quella ineffabile dolcezza*

O'erflowing with the sweets ineffable,  
Which from that lovely face my fond eyes drew,  
What time they sealed, for very rapture, grew,  
On meaner beauty never more to dwell,  
Whom most I love I left. My mind so well  
Its part, to muse on her, is trained to do,  
None else it sees; what is not hers to view,  
As of old wont, with loathing I repel.  
In a low valley shut from all around,  
Sole consolation of my heart-deep sighs,  
Pensive and slow, with Love I walk alone.  
Not ladies here, but rocks and founts are found,  
Which my thought shapes where'er I turn mine eyes.  
And of that day blest images arise.

## SONNET LXXX

*Se 'l sasso ond è piu chiusa questa valle*

If, which our valley bars, this wall of stone,  
From which its present name we closely trace,  
Were by disdainful nature razed, and thrown  
Its back to Babel and to Rome its face;  
Then had my sighs a better pathway known  
To where their hope is yet in life and grace.  
They now go singly, yet my voice all own;  
And, where I send, not one but finds its place.  
There too, as I perceive, such welcome sweet  
They ever find, that none returns again,  
But still delightedly with her remain.  
My grief is from the eyes each morn to meet—  
Not the fair scenes my soul so longed to see—  
Toil for my weary limbs and tears for me.

## SONNET LXXXI

*Rimansi addietro il sesto decim' anno*

My sixteenth year of sighs its course has run,  
I stand alone, already on the brow  
Where Age descends; and yet it seems as now  
My time of trial only were begun.  
'Tis sweet to love, and good to be undone;  
Though life be hard, more days may Heaven allow  
Misfortune to outlive; else Death may bow  
The bright head low my loving praise that won.  
Here am I now who fain would be elsewhere;  
More would I wish and yet no more I would;  
I could no more and yet did all I could;  
And new tears born of old desires declare  
That still I am as I was wont to be,  
And that a thousand changes change not me.

## SONNET LXXXII

*Dicesett' anni ha già rivolto il cielo*

The seventeenth summer now, alas! is gone,  
And still with ardor unconsumed I glow;  
Yet find, whene'er myself I seek to know,  
Amidst the fire a frosty chill come on.  
Truly 'tis said, 'Ere Habit quits her throne,  
Years bleach the hair' The senses feel life's snow,  
But not less hot the tides of passion flow:  
Such is our earthly nature's malison!  
Oh! come the happy day, when doom'd to smart  
No more, from flames and lingering sorrows free,  
Calm I may note how fast youth's minutes flew!  
Ah! will it e'er be mine the hour to see,  
When with delight, nor duty nor my heart  
Can blame, these eyes once more that angel face may  
view?

## SONNET LXXXIII

*Quel vago impallidir che 'l dolce riso*

That witching paleness, which with cloud of love  
Veil'd her sweet smile, majestically bright,  
So thrill'd my heart that from the bosom's night  
Midway to meet it on her face it strove.  
Then learned I how, 'mid realms of joy above,  
The blest behold the blest. In such pure light  
I scann'd her tender thought, to others' sight  
Viewless!—but my fond glances would not rove.  
Each angel grace, each lowly courtesy,  
E'er traced in dame by Love's soft power inspired,  
Would seem but foils to those that prompt my lay:  
Upon the ground was cast her gentle eye,  
And still methought, though silent, she inquired,  
“What bears my faithful friend so soon, so far away?”

## SONNET LXXXIV

*Amor, Fortuna, e la mia mente schiva*

Love, Fortune, and my melancholy mind,  
Sick of the present, lingering on the past,  
Afflict me so, that envious thoughts I cast  
On those who life's dark shore have left behind.  
Love racks my bosom: Fortune's wintry wind  
Kills every comfort: my weak mind at last  
Is chafed and pines, so many ills and vast  
Expose its peace to constant strifes unkind.  
Nor hope I better days will turn again;  
But what is left from bad to worse may pass;  
For ah! already life is on the wane.  
Not now of adamant, but frail as glass,  
I see my best hopes fall from me or fade,  
And low in dust my fond thoughts broken laid.

## SONNET LXXXV

*Poi che 'l cammìn m' è chiuso di mercede*

Since mercy's door is closed, alas! to me,  
And hopeless paths my poor life separate  
From her in whom, I know not by what fate,  
The guerdon lay of all my constancy,  
My heart that lacks not other food, on sighs  
I feed; to sorrow born, I live on tears;  
Nor therefore mourn I; sweeter far appears  
My present grief than others can surmise.  
On thy dear portrait rests alone my view,  
Which nor Praxiteles nor Zeuxis drew,  
But a more bold and cunning pencil framed.  
What shore can hide me, or what distance shield,  
If by my cruel exile yet untamed  
Insatiate Envy finds me here concealed?

## SONNET LXXXVI

*Io canterei d' Amor sì nuovamente*

Ways apt and new to sing of love I'd find,  
Forcing from her hard heart full many a sigh,  
And re-enkindle in her frozen mind  
Desires a thousand, passionate and high;  
O'er her fair face would see each swift change pass,  
See her fond eyes at length where pity reigns,  
As one who sorrows when too late, alas!  
For his own error and another's pains;  
See the fresh roses edging that fair snow  
Move with her breath, that ivory descried,  
Which turns to marble him who sees it near;  
See all, for which in this brief life below  
Myself I weary not but rather pride  
That Heaven for later times has kept me here.



## SONNET LXXXVII

*S' Amor non è, che dunque è quel ch' i' sento*

If no love is, O God, what feel I so?  
And if love is, what thing and which is he?  
If love be gode, from whence cometh my woe?  
If it be wicke, a wonder thinketh me  
When every torment and adversite  
That cometh of him may to me savory thinke:  
For aye more thurst I the more that I drinke  
And if that at my owne lust I brenne,  
From whence cometh my wailing and my pleinte?  
If harme agre me wherto pleine I thenne?  
I not nere why unwery that I feinte.  
O quickè death, O surelè harme so quaint,  
How may I see in me such quantite,  
But if that I consent that so it be?

## SONNET LXXXVIII

*Amor m' ha posto come segno a strale*

Love makes me as the target for his dart,  
As snow in sunshine, or as wax in flame,  
Or gale-driven cloud; and, Laura, on thy name  
I call, but thou no pity wilt impart.  
Thy radiant eyes first caused my bosom's smart;  
No time, no place can shield me from their beam;  
From thee (but, ah, thou treat'st it as a dream!)  
Proceed the torments of my suffering heart.  
Each thought's an arrow, and thy face a sun,  
My passion's flame; and these doth Love employ  
To wound my breast, to dazzle, and destroy.  
Thy heavenly song, thy speech with which I'm won,  
All thy sweet breathings of such strong control,  
Form the dear gale that bears away my soul.



**PETRARCH READING HIS CANZONIERE TO HIS FRIENDS**  
*From a Painting by Alexandre Cabanel*





## SONNET LXXXIX

*Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra*

I fynde no peace and all my warre is done,  
I feare and hope, I bourne and freese lyke yse;  
I flye above the wynde, yet cannot ryse;  
And nought I have, yet all the worlde I season,  
That looseth, nor lacketh, holdes me in pryson,  
And holdes me not, yet can I escape no wyse.  
Nor lets me leeve, nor die at my devyce,  
And yet of death it giveth none occasion.  
Without eye I see, and without tongue I playne;  
I desyre to perishe, yet aske I health;  
I love another, and yet I hate my self;  
I feede in sorrow and laughe in all my payne,  
Lykewyse pleaseth me both death and lyf,  
And my delight is cawser of my grief.

## SONNET XC

*Amor che nel pensier mio vive e regna*

Love, that liveth and reigneth in my thought,  
That built its seat within my captive breast;  
Clad in the arms wherein with me he fought,  
Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.  
She that me taught to love, and suffer pain;  
My doubtful hope, and eke my hot desire,  
With shamefaced cloak to shadow and restrain,  
Her smiling grace converteth straight to ire.  
And coward love then to the heart apace  
Taketh his flight; whereas he lurks, and plains  
His purpose lost, and dare not show his face.  
For my lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pains.  
Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove:  
Sweet is his death, that takes his end by love.

## SONNET XCI

*Come talora al caldo tempo suole*

As when at times in summer's scorching heats,  
Lured by the light, the simple insect flies,  
As a charm'd thing, into the passer's eyes,  
Whence death the one and pain the other meets,  
Thus ever I, my fatal sun to greet,  
Rush to those eyes where so much sweetness lies  
That reason's guiding hand fierce Love defies,  
And by strong will is better judgment beat.  
I clearly see they value me but ill,  
And, for against their torture fails my strength,  
That I am doom'd my life to lose at length;  
But Love so dazzles and deludes me still,  
My heart their pain and not my loss laments,  
And blind, to its own death my soul consents.

## SONNET XCII

*Quand' io v' odo parlar sì dolcemente*

Whene'er you speak of her in that soft tone  
Which Love himself his votaries surely taught,  
My ardent passion to such fire is wrought,  
That e'en the dead reviving warmth might own:  
Where'er to me she, dear or kind, was known  
There the bright lady is to mind now brought,  
In the same bearing that, to waken thought,  
Needed no sound but of my sighs alone.  
Half-turn'd I see her looking, on the breeze  
Her light hair flung; so true her memories roll  
On my fond heart of which she keeps the keys;  
But the surpassing bliss that floods my soul  
So checks my tongue, to tell how, queen-like, there,  
She sits as on her throne, I never dare.

## SONNET XCIII

*Nè così bello il sol giammai levarsi:*

Ne'er can the sun such radiance soft display,  
Piercing some cloud that would its light impair;  
Ne'er tinged some showery arch the humid air,  
With variegated luster half so gay,  
As when, sweet-smiling my fond heart away,  
All-beauteous shone my captivating fair;  
For charms what mortal can with her compare!  
But truth, impartial truth! much more might say.  
I saw young Cupid, saw his laughing eyes  
With such bewitching, amorous sweetness roll,  
That every human glance I since despise  
Believe, dear friend! I saw the wanton boy;  
Bent was his bow to wound my tender soul;  
Yet, ah! once more I'd view the dangerous joy.

## SONNET XCIV

*Pommi ove 'l sol occide i fiori e l'erba*

Place me where angry Titan burns the Moor,  
And thirsty Afric fiery monsters brings,  
Or where the new-born phoenix spreads her wings,  
And troops of wond'ring birds her flight adore;  
Place me by Gange, or Ind's empamper'd shore,  
Where smiling heavens on earth cause double springs;  
Place me where Neptune's quire of syrens sings,  
Or where, made hoarse through cold, he leaves to roar;  
Me place where Fortune doth her darlings crown,  
A wonder or a spark in Envy's eye,  
Or late outrageous fates upon me frown,  
And pity wailing, see disaster'd me—  
Affection's print my mind so deep doth prove,  
I may forget myself, but not my love.



## SONNET XCV

*O d' ardente virtute ornata e calda*

O mind, by ardent virtue graced and warm'd,  
To whom my pen so oft pours forth my heart;  
Mansion of noble probity, who art  
A tower of strength 'gainst all assault full arm'd.  
O rose effulgent, in whose foldings, charm'd,  
We view with fresh carnation snow take part!  
O pleasure whence my winged ideas start  
To that bless'd vision which no eye, unharm'd,  
Created, may approach—thy name, if rhyme  
Could bear to Bactra and to Thule's coast,  
Nile, Tanais, and Calpe should resound,  
And dread Olympus. But a narrower bound  
Confines my flight; and thee, our native clime  
Between the Alps and Apennine must boast.

## SONNET XCVI

*Quando 'l voler, che con duo sproni ardenti*

When, with two ardent spurs and a hard rein,  
Passion, my daily life who rules and leads,  
From time to time the usual law exceeds  
That calm, at least in part, my spirits may gain,  
It findeth her who, on my forehead plain,  
The dread and daring of my deep heart reads,  
And seeth Love, to punish its misdeeds,  
Lighten her piercing eyes with worse disdain.  
Wherefore—as one who fears the impending blow  
Of angry Jove—it back in haste retires,  
For great fears ever master great desires;  
But the cold fire and shrinking hopes which so  
Lodge in my heart, transparent as a glass,  
O'er her sweet face at times make gleams of grace to  
pass.

## SONNET XCVII

*Non Tesin, Po, Varo, Arno, Adige e Tebro*

Not all the streams that water the bright earth,  
Not all the trees to which its breast gives birth,  
Can cooling drop or healing balm impart  
To slack the fire which scorches my sad heart,  
As one fair brook which ever weeps with me,  
Or, which I praise and sing, as one dear tree.  
This only help I find amid Love's strife;  
Wherefore it me behoves to live my life  
In arms, which else from me too rapid goes.  
Thus on fresh shore the lovely laurel grows;  
Who planted it, his high and graceful thought  
'Neath its sweet shade, to Sorgia's murmurs, wrote.

## SONNET XCVIII

## THE POET AND HIS HEART

*Che fai alma? che pensi? avrem mai pace?*

- P. What, act, what dream, absorbs thee, O my soul?  
Say, must we peace, a truce, or warfare hail?
- H. Our fate I know not; but her eyes unveil  
The grief our woe doth in her heart enroll.
- P. But that is vain, since by her eyes' control  
With nature I no sympathy inhale.
- H. Yet guiltless she, for Love doth there prevail.
- P. No balm to me, since she will not condole.
- H. When man is mute, how oft the spirit grieves,  
In clamorous woe! how oft the sparkling eye  
Belies the inward tear, where none can gaze!
- P. Yet restless still, the grief the mind conceives  
Is not dispell'd, but stagnant seems to lie.  
The wretched hope not, though hope aid might raise

## SONNET XCIX

*Non d' atra e tempestosa onda marina*

No wearied mariner to port e'er fled  
From the dark billow, when some tempest's nigh,  
As from tumultuous gloomy thoughts I fly—  
Thoughts by the force of goading passion bred;  
Nor wrathful glance of heaven so surely sped  
Destruction to man's sight, as does that eye  
Within whose bright black orb Love's Deity  
Sharpens each dart, and tips with gold its head.  
Enthroned in radiance there he sits, not blind,  
Quivered, and naked, or by shame just veil'd,  
A live, not fabled boy, with changeful wing;  
Thence unto me he lends instruction kind,  
And arts of verse from meaner bards conceal'd,  
Thus am I taught whate'er of love I write or sing.

## SONNET C

*Questa umil fera, un cor di tigre o d' orsa*

Fiercer than tiger, savager than bear,  
In human guise an angel form appears,  
Who between fear and hope, from smiles to tears  
So tortures me that doubt becomes despair.  
Ere long if she nor welcomes me, nor frees,  
But, as her wont, between the two retains,  
By the sweet poison circling through my veins,  
My life, O Love! will soon be on its lees.  
No longer can my virtue, worn and frail  
With such severe vicissitudes, contend,  
At once which burn and freeze, make red and pale  
By flight it hopes at length its grief to end,  
As one who, hourly failing, feels death nigh:  
Powerless he is indeed who cannot even die!

**LA FIAMMETTA**  
**BY**  
**GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO**  
**TRANSLATED BY JAMES C. BROGAN**



## INTRODUCTION

**Y**OUTH, beauty, and love, wit, gayety and laughter, are the component parts of the delightful picture conjured up by the mere name of Giovanni Boccaccio, the prince of story-tellers for all generations of men. This creator of a real literary epoch was born in Paris, in 1313, (in the eleventh year of Dante's exile), of an Italian father and a Frenchwoman of good family. His father was a merchant of Florence, whither he returned with his son when the child was seven years old. The boy received some education, but was placed in a counting-house when he was only thirteen, and at seventeen he was sent by his father to Naples to enter another commercial establishment. But he disliked commerce, and finally persuaded his father to allow him to study law for two years at the University of Naples, during which period the lively and attractive youth made brisk use of his leisure time in that gay and romantic city, where he made his way into the highest circles of society, and unconsciously gleaned the material for the rich harvest of song and story that came with his later years. At this time he was present at the coronation of the poet Petrarch in the Capitol, and was fired with admiration for the second greatest poet of that day. He chose Petrarch for his model and guide, and in riper manhood became his most intimate friend.

By the time he was twenty-five, Boccaccio had fallen in love with the Lady Maria, a natural daughter of King Robert of Naples, who had caused her to be adopted as a member of the family of the Count d'Aquino, and to be married when very young to a Neapolitan nobleman. Boccaccio first saw her in the Church of San Lorenzo on the morning of Easter eve, in 1338, and their ensuing friendship was no secret to their world. For the entertainment of this youthful beauty he wrote his *Filicopo*, and the fair Maria is undoubtedly the heroine of several of his stories and poems. His father insisted upon his return to Florence in 1340, and after he had settled in that city he occupied himself seriously with literary work, producing, between the years 1343 and 1355, the *Teseide* (familiar to English readers as "The Knight's Tale" in Chaucer, modernized by Dryden as "Palamon and Arcite"), *Ameto*, *Amorosa Visione*, *La Fiammetta*, *Ninfale Fiesolona*, and his most famous work, the *Decameron*, a collection of stories written, it is said, to amuse Queen Joanna of Naples and her court, during the period when one of the world's greatest plagues swept over Europe in 1348. In these years he rose from the vivid but confused and exaggerated manner of *Filicopo* to the perfection of polished literary style. The *Decameron* fully revealed his genius, his ability to weave the tales of all lands and all ages into one harmonious whole; from the confused mass of legends of the Middle Ages, he evolved a world of human interest and dazzling beauty, fixed the kaleidoscopic picture of Italian society, and set it in the richest frame of romance.

While he had the *Decameron* still in hand, he paused

in that great work, with heart full of passionate longing for the lady of his love, far away in Naples, to pour out his very soul in *La Fiammetta*, the name by which he always called the Lady Maria. Of the real character of this lady, so famous in literature, and her true relations with Boccaccio, little that is certain is known. In several of his poems and in the *Decameron* he alludes to her as being cold as a marble statue, which no fire can ever warm; and there is no proof, notwithstanding the ardor of Fiammetta as portrayed by her lover—who no doubt wished her to become the reality of his glowing picture—that he ever really received from the charmer whose name was always on his lips anything more than the friendship that was apparent to all the world. But she certainly inspired him in the writing of his best works.

The best critics agree in pronouncing *La Fiammetta* a marvelous performance. John Addington Symonds says: "It is the first attempt in any literature to portray subjective emotion exterior to the writer; since the days of Virgil and Ovid, nothing had been essayed in this region of mental analysis. The author of this extraordinary work proved himself a profound anatomist of feeling by the subtlety with which he dissected a woman's heart." The story is full of exquisite passages, and it exercised a widespread and lasting influence over all the narrative literature that followed it. It is so rich in material that it furnished the motives of many tales, and the novelists of the sixteenth century availed themselves freely of its suggestions.

After Boccaccio had taken up a permanent residence in Florence, he showed a lively interest in her political



affairs, and fulfilled all the duties of a good citizen. In 1350 he was chosen to visit the lords of various towns of Romagna, in order to engage their coöperation in a league against the Visconti family, who, already lords of the great and powerful city of Milan, desired to extend their domains beyond the Apennines. In 1351 Boccaccio had the pleasure of bearing to the poet Petrarch the news of the restoration of his rights of citizenship and of his patrimony, both of which he had lost in the troubles of 1323, and during this visit the two geniuses became friends for life. They delved together into the literature of the ancients, and Boccaccio determined, through the medium of translation, to make the work of the great Greek writers a part of the liberal education of his countrymen. A knowledge of Greek at that time was an exceedingly rare accomplishment, since the serious study of living literatures was only just beginning, and the Greek of Homer had been almost forgotten. Even Petrarch, whose erudition was marvelous, could not read a copy of the *Iliad* that he possessed. Boccaccio asked permission of the Florentine Government to establish a Greek professorship in the University of Florence, and persuaded a learned Calabrian, Leonzio Pilato, who had a perfect knowledge of ancient Greek, to leave Venice and accept the professorship at Florence, and lodged him in his own house. Together the Calabrian and the author of *La Fiammetta* and the *Decameron* made a Latin translation of the *Iliad*, which Boccaccio transcribed with his own hand. But his literary enthusiasm was not confined to his own work and that of the ancients. His soul was filled with a gener-

ous ardor of admiration for Dante; through his efforts the Florentines were awakened to a true sense of the merits of the sublime poet, so long exiled from his native city, and the younger genius succeeded in persuading them to establish a professorship in the University for the sole study of the *Divine Comedy*, he himself being the first to occupy the chair, and writing a *Life of Dante*, besides commentaries on the *Comedy* itself.

Mainly through his intimacy with the spiritual mind of Petrarch, Boccaccio's moral character gradually underwent a change from the reckless freedom and unbridled love of pleasure into which he had easily fallen among his associates in the court life at Naples. He admired the delicacy and high standard of honor of his friend, and became awakened to a sense of man's duty to the world and to himself. During the decade following the year 1365 he occupied himself at his home in Certaldo, near Florence, with various literary labors, often entertaining there the great men of the world.

Petrarch's death occurred in 1374, and Boccaccio survived him but one year, dying on the twenty-first of December, 1375. He was buried in Certaldo, in the Church of San Michele e Giacomo.

That one city should have produced three such men as the great triumvirate of the fourteenth century—Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio—and that one half-century should have witnessed their successive triumphs, is the greatest glory of Florence, and is one of the most notable facts in the history of genius.

We quote once more from Symonds: "Dante brought the universe into his *Divine Comedy*. 'But the soul of

man, too, is a universe', and of this inner microcosm Petrarch was the poet and genius. It remained for Boccaccio to treat of daily life with an art as distinct and dazzling as theirs. From Dante's Beatrice, through Petrarch's Laura, to Boccaccio's La Fiammetta—from woman as an allegory of the noblest thoughts and purest stirrings of the soul, through woman as the symbol of all beauty worshiped at a distance, to woman as man's lover, kindling and reciprocating the most ardent passion; from mystic, stately periods to Protean prose; from verse built up into cathedral-like dignity, through lyrics light as arabesques and pointed with the steely touch of polished style, to that free form of speech which takes all moods and lends itself alike to low or lofty things—such was the rapid movement of Italian genius within the brief space of fifty years. So quickly did the Renaissance emerge from the Middle Ages; and when the voices of that august trio were silenced in the grave, their echoes ever widened and grew louder through the spacious time to come."

No translation into English of *La Fiammetta* has been made since Shakespeare's time—when a small edition was published, which is now so rare as to be practically unattainable—until the appearance of the present scholarly and poetic rendering, which places within the reach of all one of the world's greatest masterpieces of literature.

D. K. R.

## PROLOGUE

*Beginneth the Book called Elegy of Madonna Fiammetta, sent by her to Ladies in Love.*

**W**HEN the wretched perceive or feel that their woes arouse compassion, their longing to give vent to their anguish is thereby increased. And so, since, from long usance, the cause of my anguish, instead of growing less, has become greater, the wish has come to me, noble ladies—in whose hearts, mayhap, abides a love more fortunate than mine—to win your pity, if I may, by telling the tale of my sorrows. Nor is it at all my intent that these my words should come to the ears of men. Nay, rather would I, so far as lies in my power, withhold my complaints from them; for, such bitterness has the discovery of the unkindness of one man stirred in me, that, imagining all other men to be like him, methinks I should be a witness of their mocking laughter rather than of their pitying tears. You alone do I entreat to peruse my story, knowing full well that you will feel with me, and that you have a pious concern for others' pangs. Here you will not find Grecian fables adorned with many lies, nor Trojan battles, foul with blood and gore, but amorous sentiments fed with torturing desires. Here will appear before your very eyes the dolorous tears, the impetuous sighs, the heart-breaking words, the stormy thoughts, which have harrowed me with an ever-recurring goad, and have torn away from me sleep and appetite and the pleasant times of old, and my much-loved beauty. When you behold these things, and behold them with the ardent feelings which ladies are wont to have, sure

I am that the cheeks of each separately, and of all when brought together, will be bathed in tears, because of those ills which are alone the occasion of my never-ending misery. Do not, I beseech you, refuse me these tears, reflecting that your estate is unstable as well as mine, and that, should it ever come to resemble mine (the which may God forfend!), the tears that others shed for you will be pleasing to you in return. And that the time may pass more rapidly in speaking than in weeping, I will do my best to fulfil my promise briefly, beginning with that love which was more happy than lasting, so that, by comparing that happiness with my present case, you may learn that I am now more unhappy than any woman ever has been. And afterward I will trace with mournful pen, as best I can, all the agonies which are justly the source of my lamentations. But first, if the prayers of the wretched are heard, if there is in Heaven any Deity whose holy mind can be touched with compassion for me, afflicted as I am, bathed in my own tears, Him I beseech to aid my despondent memory and support my trembling hand in its present task. So may the tortures which I have felt and still feel in my soul become fruitful, and the memory will suggest the words for them, and the hand, more eager than apt for such duty, will write them down.

**BOCCACCIO BEFORE THE QUEEN OF NAPLES**

*From a Painting by Jacques Wagrez*



## CHAPTER I

*Wherein the lady describes who she was, and by what signs her misfortunes were foreshadowed, and at what time, and where, and in what manner, and of whom she became enamored, with the description of the ensuing delight*

**I**N the time when the newly-vestured earth appears more lovely than during all the rest of the year came I into the world, begotten of noble parents and born amid the unstinted gifts of benignant fortune. Accursed be the day, to me more hateful than any other, on which I was born! Oh, how far more befitting would it have been had I never been born, or had I been carried from that luckless womb to my grave, or had I possessed a life not longer than that of the teeth sown by Cadmus, or had Atropos cut the thread of my existence at the very hour when it had begun! Then, in earliest childhood would have been entombed the limitless woes that are the melancholy occasion of that which I am writing. But what boots it to complain of this now? I am here, beyond doubt, and it has pleased and even now pleases God that I should be here. Born and reared, then, amid boundless affluence, I learned under a venerable mistress whatever manners and refinements it beseems a demoiselle of high rank to know. And as my person grew and developed with my increasing years, so also grew and developed my beauty. Alas! even while a child, on hearing that beauty acclaimed of many, I gloried therein, and cultivated it by ingenious care and art. And when I had bidden farewell to childhood, and had attained a riper age, I soon discovered that this, my beauty—ill-fated gift for one who desires to live virtuously!—had power to kindle amorous sparks in youths of my own



age, and other noble persons as well, being instructed thereupon by nature, and feeling that love can be quickened in young men by beauteous ladies. And by divers looks and actions, the sense of which I did but dimly discern at the time, did these youths endeavor in numberless ways to kindle in my heart the fire wherewith their own hearts glowed—fire that was destined, not to warm, but rather to consume me also in the future more than it ever has burned another woman; and by many of these young men was I sought in marriage with most fervid and passionate entreaty. But after I had chosen among them one who was in every respect congenial to me, this importunate crowd of suitors, being now almost hopeless, ceased to trouble me with their looks and attentions. I, therefore, being satisfied, as was meet, with such a husband, lived most happily, so long as fervid love, lighted by flames hitherto unfelt, found no entrance into my young soul. Alas! I had no wish unsatisfied; nothing that could please me or any other lady ever was denied me, even for a moment. I was the sole delight, the peculiar felicity of a youthful spouse, and, just as he loved me, so did I equally love him. Oh, how much happier should I have been than all other women, if the love for him that was then in my heart had endured!

It was, then, while I was living in sweet content, amid every kind of enjoyment, that Fortune, who quickly changes all things earthly, becoming envious of the very gifts which she herself had bestowed, withdrew her protecting hand. At first uncertain in what manner she could succeed in poisoning my happiness, she at length managed, with subtle craft, to make mine own very eyes traitors and so guide me into the path that led to disaster. But the gods were still propitious to me, nay, were even more concerned for my fate than I myself. Having seen through her veiled malice, they wished to supply me with weapons, had I but known how to avail me

thereof, wherewith I might fend my breast, and not go unarmed to the battle wherein I was destined to fall. Yea, on the very night that preceded the day which was the beginning of all my woes, they revealed to me the future in my sleep by means of a clear and distinct vision, in such wise as follows:

While lying on my spacious couch, with all my limbs relaxed in deepest slumber, I seemed to be filled with greater joy than I had ever felt before, and wherefore I knew not. And the day whereon this happened was the brightest and loveliest of days. I was standing alone in verdant grass, when, with the joy whereof I spoke, came the thought to me that it might be well for me to repose in a meadow that appeared to be shielded from the fervid rays of the sun by the shadows cast by various trees newly garbed in their glossy foliage. But first, gathering divers flowers, wherewith the whole sward was bejeweled, I placed them, with my white hands, in a corner of my robe, and then, sitting down and choosing flower after flower, I wove therefrom a fair garland, and adorned my head with it. And, being so adorned, I arose, and, like unto Proserpine at what time Pluto ravished her from her mother, I went along singing in this new springtime. Then, being perchance weary, I laid me down in a spot where the verdure was deepest and softest. But, just as the tender foot of Eurydice was pierced by the concealed viper, so meseemed that a hidden serpent came upon me, as I lay stretched on the grass, and pierced me under the left breast. The bite of the sharp fang, when it first entered, seemed to burn me. But afterward, feeling somewhat reassured, and yet afraid of something worse ensuing, I thought I clasped the cold serpent to my bosom, fancying that by communicating to it the warmth of that bosom, I should thereby render it more kindly disposed in my regard in return for such a service. But the viper, made bolder and more obdurate

by that very favor, laid his hideous mouth on the wound he had given me, and after a long space, and after it had drunk much of my blood, methought that, despite my resistance, it drew forth my soul; and then, leaving my breast, departed with it. And at the very moment of the serpent's departure the day lost its brightness, and a thick shadow came behind me and covered me all over, and the farther the serpent crept, the more lowering grew the heavens, and it seemed almost as if the reptile dragged after it in its course the masses of thick, black clouds that appeared to follow in its wake. Not long afterward, just as a white stone flung into deep water gradually vanishes from the eyes of the beholder, so it, too, vanished from my sight. Then the heavens became darker and darker, and I thought that the sun had suddenly withdrawn and night had surely returned, as it had erstwhile returned to the Greeks because of the crime of Atreus. Next, flashes of lightning sped swiftly along the skies, and peals of crashing thunder appalled the earth and me likewise. And through all, the wound made in my breast by the bite of the serpent remained with me still, and full of viperous poison; for no medicinal help was within my reach, so that my entire body appeared to have swollen in a most foul and disgusting manner. Whereupon I, who before this seemed to be without life or motion—why, I do not know—feeling that the force of the venom was seeking to reach my heart in divers subtle ways, now tossed and rolled upon the cool grass, expecting death at any moment. But methought that when the hour of my doom arrived, I was struck with terror at its approach, and the anguish of my heart was so appalling, while looking forward to its coming, that my inert body was convulsed with horror, and so my deep slumber was suddenly broken. No sooner was I fully awake than, being still alarmed by the things I had seen, I felt with my right hand for the wound in my breast, searching at the pres-

ent moment for that which was already being prepared for my future misery. Finding that no wound was there, I began to feel quite safe and even merry, and I made a mock of the folly of dreams and of those who believe in them, and so I rendered the work of the gods useless. Ah, wretched me! if I mocked them then, I had good reason to believe in them afterward, to my bitter sorrow and with the shedding of useless tears; good reason had I also to complain of the gods, who reveal their secrets to mortals in such mystic guise that the things that are to happen in the future can hardly be said to be revealed at all. Being then fully awake, I raised my drowsy head, and, as soon as I saw the light of the new-risen sun enter my chamber, laying aside every other thought directly, I at once left my couch.

That day, too, was a day of the utmost solemnity for almost everyone. Therefore, attiring myself carefully in glittering cloth of gold, and adorning every part of my person with deft and cunning hand, I made ready to go to the august festival, appareled like unto the goddesses seen by Paris in the vale of Ida. And, while I was lost in admiration of myself, just as the peacock is of his plumage, imagining that the delight which I took in my own appearance would surely be shared by all who saw me, a flower from my wreath fell on the ground near the curtain of my bed, I know not wherefore—perhaps plucked from my head by a celestial hand by me unseen. But I, careless of the occult signs by which the gods forewarn mortals, picked it up, replaced it on my head, and, as if nothing portentous had happened, I passed out from my abode. Alas! what clearer token of what was to befall me could the gods have given me? This should have served to prefigure to me that my soul, once free and sovereign of itself, was on that day to lay aside its sovereignty and become a slave, as it betided. Oh, if my mind had not been distempered, I should have surely

known that to me that day would be the blackest and direst of days, and I should have let it pass without ever crossing the threshold of my home! But although the gods usually hold forth signs whereby those against whom they are incensed may be warned, they often deprive them of due understanding; and thus, while pointing out the path they ought to follow, they at the same time sate their own anger. My ill fortune, then, thrust me forth from my house, vain and careless that I was; and, accompanied by several ladies, I moved with slow step to the sacred temple, in which the solemn function required by the day was already celebrating. Ancient custom, as well as my noble estate, had reserved for me a prominent place among the other ladies. When I was seated, my eyes, as was my habit of old, quickly wandered around the temple, and I saw that it was crowded with men and women, who were divided into separate groups. And no sooner was it observed that I was in the temple than (even while the sacred office was going on) that happened which had always happened at other times, and not only did the men turn their eyes to gaze upon me, but the women did the same, as if Venus or Minerva had newly descended from the skies, and would never again be seen by them in that spot where I was seated. Oh, how often I laughed within my own breast, being enraptured with myself, and taking glory unto myself because of such things, just as if I were a real goddess! And so, nearly all the young gentlemen left off admiring the other ladies, and took their station around me, and straightway encompassed me almost in the form of a complete circle; and, while speaking in divers ways of my beauty, each finished his praises thereof with well-nigh the same sentences. But I who, by turning my eyes in another direction, showed that my mind was intent on other cares, kept my ears attentive to their discourse and received therefrom much delectable sweet-

ness; and, as it seemed to me that I was beholden to them for such pleasure, I sometimes let my eyes rest on them more kindly and benignantly. And not once, but many times, did I perceive that some of them, puffed up with vain hopes because of this, boasted foolishly of it to their companions.

While I, then, in this way looked at a few, and that sparingly, I was myself looked at by many, and that exceedingly, and while I believed that my beauty was dazzling others, it came to pass that the beauty of another dazzled me, to my great tribulation. And now, being already close on the dolorous moment, which was fated to be the occasion either of a most assured death or of a life of such anguish that none before me has ever endured the like, prompted by I know not what spirit, I raised my eyes with decent gravity, and surveyed with penetrating look the crowds of young men who were standing near me. And I discerned, more plainly than I saw any of the others, a youth who stood directly in front of me, all alone, leaning against a marble column; and, being moved thereto by irresistible fate, I began to take thought within my mind of his bearing and manners, the which I had never before done in the case of anyone else. I say, then, that, according to my judgment, which was not at that time biased by love, he was most beautiful in form, most pleasing in deportment, and apparently of an honorable disposition. The soft and silky locks that fell in graceful curls beside his cheeks afforded manifest proof of his youthfulness. The look wherewith he eyed me seemed to beg for pity, and yet it was marked by the wariness and circumspection usual between man and man. Sure I am that I had still strength enough to turn away my eyes from his gaze, at least for a time; but no other occurrence had power to divert my attention from the things already mentioned, and upon which I had deeply pondered. And the image

of his form, which was already in my mind, remained there, and this image I dwelt upon with silent delight, affirming within myself that those things were true which seemed to me to be true; and, pleased that he should look at me, I raised my eyes betimes to see whether he was still looking at me. But anon I gazed at him more steadily, making no attempt to avoid amorous snares. And when I had fixed my eyes on his more intently than was my wont, methought I could read in his eyes words which might be uttered in this wise:

"O lady, thou alone art mine only bliss!"

Certainly, if I should say that this idea was not pleasing to me, I should surely lie, for it drew forth a gentle sigh from my bosom, accompanied by these words: "And thou art mine!" unless, perchance, the words were but the echo of his, caught by my mind and remaining within it. But what availed it whether such words were spoken or not? The heart had good understanding within itself of that which was not expressed by the lips, and kept, too, within itself that which, if it had escaped outside, might, mayhap, have left me still free. And so, from that time forward, I gave more absolute liberty to my foolish eyes than ever they had possessed before, and they were well content withal. And surely, if the gods, who guide all things to a definite issue, had not deprived me of understanding, I could still have been mistress of myself. But, postponing every consideration to the last one that swayed me, I took delight in following my unruly passion, and having made myself meet, all at once, for such slavery, I became its thrall. For the fire that leaped forth from his eyes encountered the light in mine, flashing thereunto a most subtle ray. It did not remain content therewith, but, by what hidden ways I know not, penetrated directly into the deepest recesses of my heart; the which, affrighted by the sudden advent of this flame,

recalled to its center its exterior forces and left me as pale as death, and also with the chill of death upon me. But not for long did this continue, rather it happened contrariwise; and I felt my heart not only glow with sudden heat, but its forces speeded back swiftly to their places, bringing with them a throbbing warmth that chased away my pallor and flushed my cheeks deeply; and, marveling wherefore this should betide, I sighed heavily; nor thereafter was there other thought in my soul than how I might please him.

In like fashion, he, without changing his place, continued to scrutinize my features, but with the greatest caution; and, perhaps, having had much practice in amorous warfare, and knowing by what devices the longed-for prey might be captured, he showed himself every moment more humble, more desperate, and more fraught with tender yearning. Alas! how much guile did that seeming desperation hide, which, as the result has now shown, though it may have come from the heart, never afterward returned to the same, and made manifest later that its revealment on the face was only a lure and a delusion! And, not to mention all his deeds, each of which was full of most artful deception, he so wrought upon me by his own craft, or else the fates willed it should so happen, that I straightway found myself enmeshed in the snares of sudden and unthought-of love, in a manner beyond all my powers of telling, and so I remain unto this very hour.

It was this one alone, therefore, most pitiful ladies, that my heart, in its mad infatuation, chose, not only among so many high-born, handsome and valiant youths then present, but even among all of the same degree having their abode in my own Parthenope, as first and last and sole lord of my life. It was this one alone that I loved, and loved more than any other. It was this one alone that was destined to be the beginning and source of my



every ill, and also, as I fain would hope, the occasion of an ill-starred death. Thus, too, was that day whereon from a free woman I was changed unto a most abject slave. This, too, was that day whereon the poison of love first filled my pure and chaste bosom. Alas! woe is me! what anguish did that day bring into the world for me! Alas! woe is me! what pangs, what tortures should I have escaped, if that day had turned to blackest night! Alas and alas! and woe is me! how fatal and malign was that day to my honor! But what boots my complaining? The past can be much more easily blamed than amended.

I was, then, enslaved, as has been said, and, whether it was one of the hell-born Furies or malignant Fortune, who, envying my chaste estate, plotted to this end, I know not; but, whichever it was, she had good reason to exult in the prospect of the certain victory that was to crown her wiles. Surprised, then, by this new passion, bewildered, and almost maddened, I sat among the other ladies, letting the sacred offices pass unnoticed, for I hardly heard, still less understood them; nor did I pay heed, either, to the different remarks my companions addressed to me. And yet, though this new and sudden love had taken a grip of my very soul, and my soul ever cleaved to the face of the beloved youth through the medium of my thoughts and of my eyes, within myself I knew not what was to be the issue I sought for such unextinguishable passion. Oh, how often, longing to see him nearer to me, did I blame him for remaining so far away, thinking that the caution he was careful to observe arose from indifference. And the youths who stood in front of him annoyed me also, since they, whenever my eyes sought my beloved, seemed to fancy that my glances rested on them, and perhaps imagined that it was they themselves who were the goal of my affections. But while my thoughts were thus engrossed, the solemn

office came to an end, and my companions had already risen to depart before I was able to recall my thoughts from dwelling on the image of the charming youth, and perceived that it was time to leave. I stood up, therefore, along with the others, and, turning my eyes on him, I saw by his attitude that which I was ready to show forth by mine, and did, indeed, show forth; namely, that my going away in this fashion was very grievous to me. Then, though still unwitting who he was, with many a sigh, I passed out of the temple.

Alas! pitiful ladies, who would ever believe that a heart could so change in a single moment. Who can imagine that a person never beheld before could be loved, and that violently, at first sight? Who can believe that my desire to see that person became so fierce that, when he was no longer before me, I suffered the most bitter agony, and that my longing to see him again was inextinguishable? Who will credit that all things which had been pleasing to me heretofore were displeasing to me then? Certainly, no one who had not experienced, or does not experience, what I experience at present. Alas! just as Love uses me now with unheard-of cruelty, so when he first ensnared me, it pleased him to subject me to a new law, different from that which binds others. I have frequently heard that, in the case of others, pleasures are in the beginning very weak; but that afterward, being fostered by the workings of the mind, they increase their force and become vigorous. But it was not so with me, for the very instant they made their lodgment in my heart they did so with that intensity wherewith they afterward abided and still abide in it. Yea, even from the beginning Love took entire possession of me. And, just as green wood catches fire with exceeding difficulty, but, having once caught, it retains it longer and with greater heat withal, so, in good sooth, did it befall me likewise. I, who had never hitherto been conquered

by any pleasure, although often tempted, being at last vanquished, have burned and now burn in the fire which then first caught me. Omitting many thoughts that came into my mind, and many things that were told me, I will only say that, intoxicated by a new passion, I returned with a soul enslaved to that spot whence I had gone forth in freedom.

When I was in my chamber, alone and unoccupied, inflamed with various wild wishes, filled with new sensations and throbbing with many anxieties, all of which were concentrated on the image of the youth who pleased me, I argued within myself that if I could not banish love from my luckless bosom, I might at least be able to keep cautious and secret control of it therein; and how hard it is to do such a thing, no one can discover who does not make trial of the same. Surely do I believe that not even Love himself can cause so great anguish as such an attempt is certain to produce. Furthermore, I was arrested in my purpose by the fact that I had no acquaintance with him of whom I professed myself enamored. To relate all the thoughts that were engendered in me by this love, and of what nature they were, would take altogether too much time. But some few I must perforce declare, as well as certain things that were beginning to delight me more than usual. I say, then, that, everything else being neglected, the only thing that was dear to me was the thought of my beloved, and, when it occurred to my mind that, by persevering in this course, I might, mayhap, give occasion to some one to discover that which I wished to conceal, I often upbraided myself for my folly. But what availed it all? My upbraidings had to give way to my inordinate yearning for him, and dissolved uselessly into thin air.

For several days I longed exceedingly to learn who was the youth I loved, toward whom my thoughts were ever clearly leading me; and this I craftily learned, the

which filled me with great content. In like manner, the ornaments for which I had before this in no way cared, as having but little need thereof, began to be dear to me, thinking that the more I was adorned the better should I please. Wherefore I prized more than hitherto my garments, gold, pearls, and my other precious things. Until the present moment it had been my custom to frequent churches, gardens, festivals, and seaside resorts, without other wish than the companionship of young friends of my own sex; now, I sought the aforesaid places with a new desire, believing that both to see and be seen would bring me great delectation. But, in sooth, the trust which I was wont to place in my beauty had deserted me, and now I never left my chamber, without first seeking the faithful counsel of my mirror: and my hands, newly instructed thereunto by I know not what cunning master, discovering each day some more elegant mode of adornment than the day before, and deftly adding artificial charms to my natural loveliness, thereby caused me to outshine all the other ladies in my surpassing splendor. Furthermore, I began to wish for the honors usually paid to me by ladies, because of their gracious courtesy, though, perhaps, they were rather the guerdon of my noble birth, being due to me therefor, thinking that if I appeared so magnificent to my beloved's eyes, he would take the more delight in beholding me. Avarice, too, which is inborn in women, fled from me, so that I became free and openhanded, and regarded my own possessions almost as if they were not my own. The sedateness that becometh a woman fell away from me somewhat, and I grew bolder in my ways; and, in addition to all this, my eyes, which until that day looked out on the world simply and naturally, entirely changed their manner of looking, and became so artful in their office that it was a marvel. And many other alterations appeared in me over and above these, all of which I do not care to relate,

for besides that the report thereof would be too tedious, I ween full well that you, like me, also have been, or are, in love, and know what changes take place in those who are in such sad case.

He was a most wary and circumspect youth, whereunto my experience was able to bear witness frequently. Going very rarely, and always in the most decorous manner, to the places where I happened to be, he used to observe me, but ever with a cautious eye, so that it seemed as if he had planned as well as I' to hide the tender flames that glowed in the breasts of both. Certainly, if I denied that love, although it had clutched every corner of my heart and taken violent possession of every recess of my soul, grew even more intense whenever it happened that my eyes encountered his, I should deny the truth; he added further fuel to the fires that consumed me, and rekindled such as might be expiring, if, mayhap, there were any such. But the beginning of all this was by no means so cheerful as the ending was joyless, as soon as I was deprived of the sight of this, my beloved, inasmuch as the eyes, being thus robbed of their delight, gave woful occasion of lamentation to the heart, the sighs whereof grew greater in quality as well as in quantity, and desire, as if seizing my every feeling, took me away from myself, and, as if I were not where I was, I frequently gave him who saw me cause for amazement by affording numberless pretexts for such happenings, being taught by love itself. In addition to this, the quiet of the night and the thoughts on which my fancy fed continuously, by taking me out of myself, sometimes moved me to actions more frantic than passionate and to the employment of unusual words.

But it happened that while my excess of ornaments, heartfelt sighs, lost rest, strange actions, frantic movements, and other effects of my recent love, attracted the notice of the other domestics of the household, they es-

pecially struck with wonder a nurse of mine, old in years and experienced, and of sound judgment, who, though well aware of the flames that tortured my breast, yet making show of not knowing thereof, frequently chided me for my altered manners. One day in particular, finding me lying disconsolate on my couch, seeing that my brow was charged with doleful thoughts, and believing that we were not likely to be interrupted by other company, she began to speak as follows:

"My dearest daughter, whom I love as my very self, tell me, I pray you, what are the sorrows that have for some time past been harassing you? You who were wont to be so gay formerly, you whom I have never seen before with a mournful countenance, seem to me now to be the prey of grief and to let no moment pass without a sigh."

Then, having at first feigned to be asleep and not to have heard her, I heaved a deep sigh, and, my face, at one time flushing, at another turning pale, I tossed about on the couch, seeking what answer I should make, though, indeed, in my agitation, my tongue could hardly shape a perfect sentence. But, at length, I answered:

"Indeed, dear nurse, no fresh sorrows harass me; nor do I feel that I am in any way different from what I am wont to be. Perhaps some troubles I may have, but they are such as are incidental to all women."

"Most certainly, you are trying to deceive me, my child," returned the aged nurse, "and you seem not to reflect how serious a matter it is to attempt to lead persons of experience to believe one thing because it is couched in words and to disbelieve the opposite, although it is made plainly evident by deeds. There is no reason why you should hide from me a fact whereof I have had perfect knowledge since several days ago"

Alas! when I heard her speak thus, provoked and stung by her words, I said:

"If, then, thou wittest of all this, wherefore dost thou question me? All that thou hast to do now is to keep secret that which thou hast discovered."

"In good truth," she replied, "I will conceal all that which it is not meet that another should know, and may the earth open and engulf me in its bowels before I ever reveal aught that might turn to thy open shame! Therefore, do thou live assured of this, and guard thyself carefully from letting another know that which I, without either thyself or anyone else telling me, have learned from observing thy looks. As for myself, it is not now, but long ere now, that I have learned to keep hidden that which should not be disclosed. Therefore, do thou continue to feel secure as to this matter, and watch most carefully that thou lettest not another know that which I, not witting it from thee or from another, most surely have discovered from thine own face and from its changeful seeming. But, if thou art still the victim of that folly by which I know thou hast been enslaved, if thou art as prone now as erewhile to indulge that feeling to which thou hast already given way, then know I right well that I must leave thee to thy own devices, for bootless will be my teachings and my warnings. Still, although this cruel tyrant, to whom in thy youthful simplicity being taken by surprise thou hast yielded thy freedom, appears to have deprived thee of understanding as well as of liberty, I will put thee in mind of many things, and entreat thee to fling off and banish wicked thoughts from thy chaste bosom, to quench that unholy fire, and not to make thyself the thrall of unworthy hopes. Now is the time to be strong in resistance; for whoso makes a stout fight in the beginning roots out an unhallowed affection, and bears securely the palm of victory; but whoso, with long and wishful fancies, fosters it, will try too late to resist a yoke that has been submitted to almost unresistingly."

"Alas!" I replied, "how far easier it is to say such things than to lead them to any good result."

"Albeit they be not easy of fulfilment," she said, "yet are they possible, and they are things that it becoms you to do. Take thou thought whether it would be fitting that for such a thing as this thou shouldst lose the luster of thy exalted parentage, the great fame of thy virtue, the flower of thy beauty, the honor in which thou art now held, and, above all, the favor of the spouse whom thou hast loved and by whom thou art loved: certainly, thou shouldst not wish for this; nor do I believe thou wouldst wish it, if thou didst but weigh the matter seriously in thine own mind. Wherefore, in the name of God, forbear, and drive from thy heart the false delights promised by a guilty hope, and, with them, the madness that has seized thee. By this aged breast, long harassed by many cares, from which thou didst take thy first nutriment, I humbly beseech thee to have the courage to aid thyself, to have a concern for thine own honor, and not to disdain my warnings. Bethink thee that the very desire to be healed is itself often productive of health."

Whereto I thus made answer:

"Only too well do I know, dear nurse, the truth of that which thou sayest. But a furious madness constrains me to follow the worse course; vainly does my heart, insatiable in its desires, long for strength to enable it to adopt thy advice; what reason enjoins is rendered of no avail by this soul-subduing passion. My mind is wholly possessed by Love, who rules every part thereof, in virtue of his all-embracing deity; and surely thou art aware that his power is absolute, and 't were useless to attempt to resist it."

Having said these words, I became almost unconscious, and fell into her arms. But she, now more agitated than before, in austere and rebuking tones, said:



"Yes, forsooth, well am I aware that you and a number of fond young women, inflamed and instigated thereunto by vain thoughts, have discovered Love to be a god, whereas a juster name for him would be that of demon; and you and they call him the son of Venus, and say that his strength has come to him from the third heaven, wishing, seemingly, to offer necessity as an excuse for your foolishness. Oh, was ever woman so misled as thou? Truly, thou must be bereft entirely of understanding! What a thing thou sayest! Love a deity! Love is a madness, thrust forth from hell by some fury. He speeds across the earth in hasty flight, and they whom he visits soon discover that he brings no deity with him, but frenzy rather; yet none will he visit except those abounding overmuch in earthly felicity; for they, he knows, in their overweening conceit, are ready to afford him lodgment and shelter. This has been proven to us by many facts. Do we not see that Venus, the true, the heavenly Venus, often dwells in the humblest cot, her sole concern being the perpetuation of our race? But this god, whom some in their folly name Love, always hankering after things unholy, ministers only to those whose fortunes are prosperous. This one, recoiling from those whose food and raiment suffice to meet the demands of nature, uses his best efforts to win over the pampered and the splendidly attired, and with their food and their habiliments he mixes his poisons, and so gains the lordship of their wicked souls; and, for this reason, he gladly seeks a harborage in lofty palaces, and seldom, or rather never, enters the houses of the lowly, because this horrible plague always resorts by choice to scenes of elegance and refinement, well knowing that such places are best fitted for the achievement of his fell purposes. It is easy for us to see that among the humble the affections are sane and well ordered; but the rich, on the other hand, everywhere pluming

themselves on their riches, and being insatiable in their pursuit of other things as well as of wealth, always show more eagerness therein than is becoming; and they who can do much desire furthermore to have the power of doing that which they must not do: among whom I feel that thou hast placed thyself, O most hapless of women, seeing that thou hast already entered and traveled far on a path that will surely lead to guilt and misery."

After hearing which, I said:

"Be silent, old woman, and provoke not the wrath of the gods by thy speech. Now that thou art incapacitated from love by age and rejected by all the gods, thou railest against this one, blaspheming him in whom thou didst erstwhile take delight. If other ladies, far more puissant, famous, and wise than I, have formerly called him by that name, it is not in my power to give him a name anew. By him am I now truly enslaved; whatever be the cause of this, and whether it be the occasion of my happiness or misery, I am helpless. The strength wherewith I once opposed him has been vanquished and has abandoned me. Therefore either death or the youth for whom I languish can alone end my tortures. If thou art, then, as wise as I hold thee to be, bestow such counsel and help on me as may lighten my anguish, or, at least, abstain from exasperating it by censuring that to which my soul, unable to act differently, is inclined with all its energy"

Thereupon, she, being angry, and not without reason, making no answer, but muttering to herself, passed out of the chamber and left me alone.

When my dear nurse had departed without making further discourse, and I was again alone, I felt that I had acted ill in despising her advice. I revolved her sayings within my restless breast; and, albeit my understanding was blinded, I perceived that what she had said was replete with wisdom, and, almost repenting of

what I had uttered and of the course which I had declared I purposed taking, I was wavering in my mind. And, already beginning to have thoughts of abandoning that course which was sure to be in every way most harmful, I was about to call her back to give me encouragement, when a new and unforeseen event suddenly changed my intention. For a most beautiful lady, come to my private chamber I know not whence, presented herself before my eyes, enveloped in such dazzling light that scarcely could my sight endure the brightness thereof. But while she stood still and silent before me, the effulgent radiance that had almost blinded my vision, after a time left it unobscured, and I was able so to portray her every aspect to my mind, as her whole beauteous figure was impressed on my memory. I saw that she was nude, except for a thin and delicate drapery of purple, which, albeit in some parts it covered the milk-white body, yet no more concealed it from my ravished eyes than does the transparent glass conceal the portrait beneath it. Her head, the hair whereof as much surpassed gold in its luster as gold surpasses the yellowest tresses to be found among mortals, was garlanded with a wreath of green myrtle, beneath whose shadow I beheld two eyes of peerless splendor, so enchanting that I could have gazed on them forever; they flashed forth such luminous beams that it was a marvel; and all the rest of her countenance had such transcendent loveliness that the like never was seen here below. At first she spake no word, perchance content that I should look upon her, or perchance seeing me so content to look upon her. Then gradually through the translucent radiance, she revealed more clearly every hidden grace, for she was aware that I could not believe such beauty possible except I beheld it with my eyes, and that even then words would fail me to picture it to mortals with my tongue. At last,

when she observed that I had sated my eyes with gazing on her, and when she saw that her coming hither was as wondrous to me as her loveliness, with smiling face, and in a voice sweeter than can be conceived by minds like ours, she thus addressed me:

"Prithee, young woman, what art thou, the most fickle of thy sex, preparing to do in obedience to the late counsels of thy aged nurse? Knowest thou not that such counsels are far harder to follow than that very love which thou desirest to flee? Hast thou reflected on the dire and unendurable torments which compliance with them will entail on thee? O most insensate one! dost thou then, who only a few hours ago wert my willing vassal, now wish to break away from my gentle rule, because, forsooth, of the words of an old woman, who is no longer vassal of mine, as if, like her, thou art now unwitting of what delights I am the source? O most witless of women! forbear, and reflect whether thou shouldst not find befitting happiness in that which makes the happiness of Heaven and earth. All things that Phœbus beholds during the bright day, from what time he emerges from Ganges, until he plunges with his tired steeds into the Hesperian waves, to seek due repose after his wearisome pilgrimage; all things that are confined between cold Arcturus and the red-hot pole, all own the absolute and authentic lordship of my wingèd son; and in Heaven not only is he esteemed a god, like the other deities, but he is so much more puissant than them all that not one remains who has not heretofore been vanquished by his darts. He, flying on golden plumage throughout his realms, with such swiftness that his passage can hardly be discerned, visits them all in turn, and, bending his strong bow, to the drawn string he fits the arrows forged by me and tempered in the fountains sacred to my divinity. And when he elects anyone to his service, as being more worthy than others, that one he rules as it likes

him. He kindles raging fires in the hearts of the young, fans the flames that are almost dead in the old, awakens the fever of passion in the chaste bosoms of virgins and instils a genial warmth into the breasts of wives and widows equally. He has even aforetime forced the gods, wrought up to a frenzy by his blazing torch, to forsake the heavens and dwell on earth under false appearances. Whereof the proofs are many. Was not Phœbus, though victor over huge Python and creator of the celestial strains that sound from the lyres of Parnassus, by him made the thrall, now of Daphne, now of Clymene, and again of Leucothea, and of many others withal? Certainly, this was so. And, finally, hiding his brightness under the form of a shepherd, did not Apollo tend the flocks of Admetus? Even Jove himself, who rules the skies, by this god coerced, molded his greatness into forms inferior to his own. Sometimes, in shape of a snow-white fowl, he gave voice to sounds sweeter than those of the dying swan, and anon, changing to a young bull and fitting horns to his brow, he bellowed along the plains, and humbled his proud flanks to the touch of a virgin's knees, and, compelling his tired hoofs to do the office of oars, he breasted the waves of his brother's kingdom, yet sank not in its depths, but joyously bore away his prize. I shall not discourse unto you of his pursuit of Semele under his proper form, or of Alcmena, in guise of Amphitryon, or of Callisto, under the semblance of Diana, or of Danae for whose sake he became a shower of gold, seeing that in the telling thereof I should waste too much time. Nay, even the savage god of war, whose strength appals the giants, repressed his wrathful bluster, being forced to such submission by this my son, and became gentle and loving. And the forger of Jupiter, and artificer of his three-pronged thunderbolts, though trained to handle fire, was smitten by a shaft

more potent than he himself had ever wrought. Nay I, though I be his mother, have not been able to fend off his arrows: Witness the tears I have shed for the death of Adonis! But why weary myself and thee with the utterance of so many words? There is no deity in heaven who has passed unscathed from his assaults; except, perhaps, Diana only, who may have escaped him by fleeing to the woods; though some there be who tell that she did not flee, but rather concealed the wound. If haply, however, thou, in the hardness of thy unbelief, rejectest the testimony of heaven, and searchest rather for examples of those in this nether world who have felt his power, I affirm them to be so multitudinous that where to begin I know not. Yet this much may I tell thee truly: all who have confessed his sway have been men of might and valor. Consider attentively, in the first place, that undaunted son of Alcmena, who, laying aside his arrows and the formidable skin of the huge lion, was fain to adorn his fingers with green emeralds, and to smooth and adjust his bristling and rebellious hair. Nay, that hand which aforetime had wielded the terrific club, and slain therewith Antæus, and dragged the hound of hell from the lower world, was now content to draw the woolen threads spun from Omphale's distaff; and the shoulders whereon had rested the pillars of the heavens, from which he had for a time freed Atlas, were now clasped in Omphale's arms, and afterward, to do her pleasure, covered with a diaphanous raiment of purple. Need I relate what Paris did in obedience to the great deity? or Helen? or Clytemnestra? or Ægisthus? These are things that are well known to all the world. Nor do I care to speak of Achilles, or of Scylla, of Ariadne or Leander, of Dido, or of many others, of whom the same tale could be told, were there need to tell it. Believe me when I affirm that this fire is holy, and most potent as well. Thou hast heard that heaven and

earth are subject to my son because of his lordship over gods and men. But what shall I say of the power that he exercises over irrational animals, whether celestial or terrene? It is through him that the turtle is fain to follow her mate; it is through him that my pigeons have learned to caress his ringdoves with fondest endearments. And there is no creeping or living creature that has ever at any time attempted to escape from his puissance: in the woods the timid stag, made fierce by his touch, becomes brave for sake of the coveted hind and by belling and fighting, they prove how powerful are the witcheries of Love. The ferocious boars are made by Love to froth at the mouth and sharpen their ivory tusks; the African lions, when Love quickens them, shake their manes in fury. But leaving the groves and forests, I assert that even in the chilly waters the numberless divinities of the sea and of the flowing rivers are not safe from the bolts of my son. Neither can I for a moment believe that thou art ignorant of the testimony thereof which has been rendered by Neptune, Glaucus, Alpheus, and others too numerous to mention: not only were they unable to quench the flame with their dank waters, but they could not even moderate its fury, which, when it had made its might felt, both on the earth and in the waters, continued its onward course, and rested not until it had penetrated into the gloomy realms of Dis. Therefore Heaven and Earth and Ocean and Hell itself have had experience of the potency of his weapons. And, in order that thou mayest understand in a few words the power of the deity, I tell thee that, while everything succumbs to Nature, and nothing can ever be emancipated from her dominion, Nature herself is but the servant of Love. When he commands, ancient hatreds perish, and angry moods, be they old or new, give place to his fires; and lastly, his sway has such

far-reaching influence that even stepmothers become gracious to their stepchildren, a thing which it is a marvel to behold. Therefore what seekest thou? Why dost thou hesitate? Why dost thou rashly avoid him? When so many gods, when so many men, when so many animals, have been vanquished by him, art ashamed to be vanquished by him also? In good sooth, thou weenest not what thou art doing. If thou fearest to be blamed for thy obedience to him, a blame so unmerited never can be thy portion. Greater sins than thou canst commit have been committed by thousands far greater than thou, and these sins would plead as thy excuse, shouldst thou pursue that course which others have pursued—others who far excel thee. Thou wilt have sinned but a little, seeing that thou hadst far less power of resistance than those aforementioned. But if my words move thee not, and thou wouldst still wish to withstand the god, bethink thee that thy power falls far short of that of Jove, and that in judgment thou canst not equal Phœbus, nor in wealth Juno, nor me in beauty; and yet, we all have been conquered. Thou art greatly deceived, and I fear me that thou must perish in the end, if thou persist in thy changed purpose. Let that which has erstwhile sufficed for the whole world, suffice for thee, nor try to render thyself cold-hearted, by saying: 'I have a husband, and the holy laws and the vowed faith forbid me this'; for bootless are such reasonings against the puissance of this god. He discards the laws of others scornfully, as thinking them of no account, and ordains his own. Pasiphæ had a husband, and Phædra, and I, too, even though I have loved. And it is these same husbands who most frequently fall in love with others, albeit they have wives of their own: witness Jason and Theseus and valiant Hector and Ulysses. Therefore to men we do no wrong if we apply to them the same laws that



they apply to others; for to them no privilege has been granted which is not accorded to us withal. Banish, then, thy foolish thoughts, and, in all security, go on loving him whom thou hadst already begun to love. In good sooth, if thou refuseth to own the power of mighty Love, it behooves thee to fly; but whither canst thou fly? Knowest thou of any retreat where he will not follow and overtake thee? He has in all places equal puissance. Go wheresoever thou wilt, never canst thou pass across the borders of his realms, and within these realms vain it is for mortals to try to hide themselves when he would smite them. But let it comfort thee to know, young woman, that no such odious passion shall trouble thee as erstwhile was the scourge of Myrrha, Semiramis, Byblis, Canace, and Cleopatra. Nothing strange or new will be wrought by my son in thy regard. He has, as have the other gods, his own special laws, which thou art not the first to obey, and shouldst not be the last to entertain hopes therefrom. If haply thou believest that thou art without companions in this, foolish is thy belief. Let us pass by the other world, which is fraught with such happenings; but observe attentively only thine own city! What an infinite number of ladies it can show who are in the same case with thyself! And remember that what is done by so many cannot be deemed unseemly. Therefore, be thou of our following, and return thanks to our beauty, which thou hast so closely examined. But return special thanks to our deity, which has sundered thee from the ranks of the simple, and persuaded thee to become acquainted with the delights that our gifts bestow."

Alas! alas! ye tender and compassionate ladies, if Love has been propitious to your desires, say what could I, what should I, answer to such and so great words uttered by so great a goddess, if not: "Be it done

unto me according to thy pleasure"? And so, I affirm that as soon as she had closed her lips, having already harvested within my understanding all her words, and feeling that every word was charged with ample excuse for what I might do, and knowing now how mighty she was and how resistless, I resolved at once to submit to her guidance; and instantly rising from my couch, and kneeling on the ground, with humbled heart, I thus began, in abashed and tremulous accents:

"O peerless and eternal loveliness! O divinest of deities! O sole mistress of all my thoughts! whose power is felt to be most invincible by those who dare to try to withstand it, forgive the ill-timed obstinacy wherewith I, in my great folly, attempted to ward off from my breast the weapons of thy son, who was then to me an unknown divinity. Now, I repeat, be it done unto me according to thy pleasure, and according to thy promises withal. Surely, my faith merits a due reward in time and space, seeing that I, taking delight in thee more than do all other women, wish to see the number of thy subjects increase forever and ever."

Hardly had I made an end of speaking these words, when she moved from the place where she was standing, and came toward me. Then, her face glowing with the most fervent expression of affection and sympathy, she embraced me, and touched my forehead with her divine lips. Next, just as the false Ascanius, when panting in the arms of Dido, breathed on her mouth, and thereby kindled the latent flame, so did she breathe on my mouth, and, in that wise, rendered the divine fire that slumbered in my heart more uncontrollable than ever, and this I felt at that very moment. Thereafter, opening a little her purple robe, she showed me, clasped in her arms against her ravishing breast, the very counterpart of the youth I loved, wrapped in the transparent folds of a Grecian mantle, and revealing in the linea-

ments of his countenance pangs that were not unlike those I suffered.

"O damsel," she said, "rivet thy gaze on the youth before thee: we have not given thee for lover a Lissa, a Geta, or a Birria, or anyone resembling them, but a person in every way worthy of being loved by every goddess in the heavens. Thee he loves more than himself, as we have ordained, and thee will he ever love; therefore do thou, joyfully and securely, abandon thyself to his love. Thy prayers have moved us to pity, as it is meet that prayers so deserving should, and so, be of good hope, and fear not that thou shalt be without the reward due thee in the future."

And thereafter she suddenly vanished from my eyes. *Oimè!* wretched me! I do not for a moment doubt now, after considering the things which followed, that this one who appeared unto me was not Venus, but rather Tisiphone, who, doffing from her head the horrid snakes that served it for hair, and assuming for the while the splendid form of the Goddess of Love, in this manner lured me with deceitful counsels to that disaster which at length overwhelmed me. Thus did Juno, but in different fashion, veiling the radiance of her deity and transforming herself for the occasion into the exact likeness of her aged nurse, persuade Semele to her undoing. Woe is me! my resolve to be so advised was the cause—O hallowed Modesty! O Chastity, most sacred of all the virtues! sole and most precious treasure of righteous women!—was the cause, I repeat, wherefore I drove ye from my bosom. Yet do I venture to pray unto ye for pardon, and surely the sinner who repents and perseveres in repentance should in due season obtain your forgiveness.

Although the goddess had disappeared from my sight, my whole soul, nevertheless, continued to crave her promised delights; and, albeit the ardor of the passion

that vexed my soul deprived me of every other feeling, one piece of good fortune, for what deserving of mine I know not, remained to me out of so many that had been lost—namely, the power of knowing that seldom if ever has a smooth and happy ending been granted to love, if that love be divulged and blazed abroad. And for this reason, when influenced by my highest thoughts, I resolved, although it was a most serious thing to do so, not to set will above reason in carrying this my desire unto an ending. And assuredly, although I have often been most violently constrained by divers accidents to follow certain courses, yet so much grace was conceded to me that, sustained by my own firmness, I passed through these agonies without revealing the pangs that tortured me. And in sooth, I have still resolution enough to continue to follow out this my purpose; so that, although the things I write are most true, I have so disposed them that no one, however keen his sagacity, can ever discover who I am, except him who is as well acquainted with these matters as I, being, indeed, the occasion of them all. And I implore him, should this little book ever come into his hands, in the name of that love which he once bore me, to conceal that which, if disclosed, would turn neither to his profit nor honor. And, albeit he has deprived me of himself, and that through no fault of mine, let him not take it upon himself to deprive me of that honor which I still possess, although, perchance, undeservedly; for should he do so, he could never again give it back to me, any more than he can now give me back himself.

Having, therefore, formed my plans in this wise, I showed the most long-suffering patience in manifesting my keenest and most covetous yearnings, and I used my best efforts, but only in secret ways and when opportunities were afforded me, to light in this young man's soul the same flames wherewith my own soul

glowed, and to make him as circumspect as myself withal. Nor, in truth, was this for me a task of great difficulty; for, inasmuch as the lineaments of the face always bear most true witness to the qualities of the heart, it was not long before I became aware that my desire would have its full fruition. I perceived that, not only was he throbbing with amorous enthusiasm, but that he was also imbued with most perfect discretion, and this was exceedingly pleasing to me. He, being at once wishful to preserve my honor in all its luster, and, at the same time, to arrange convenient times and places for our meetings, employed many ingenious stratagems, which, methinks, must have cost him much toil and trouble. He used every subtle art to win the friendship of all who were related to me, and, at last, of my husband; and not only did he enjoy their friendship, but he possessed it in such a supreme degree that no pleasure was agreeable to them unless he shared it. How much all this delighted me you will understand without its being needful to me to set it down in words. And is there anyone so dull of wit as not to conclude that from the aforesaid friendship arose many opportunities for him and me of holding discourse together in public? But already had he bethought himself of acting in more subtle ways; and now he would speak to this one, now to that one, words whereby I, being most eager for such enlightenment, discovered that whatever he said to these was fraught with figurative and hidden meanings, intended to show forth his ardent affection for myself. When he was sensible that I had a clear perception of the occult significance of his questions and answers, he went still further, and by gestures, and mobile changes in the expression of his features, he would make known to me his thoughts and the various phases of his passion, which was to me a source of much delectation; and I strove so hard to

comprehend it all and to make fitting response thereunto, that neither could he shadow forth anything to me, nor I to him, that either of us did not at once understand.

Nay, not satisfied even with this, he employed other symbols and metaphors, and labored earnestly to discipline me in such manner of speech; and, to render me the more assured of his unalterable love, he named me Fiammetta, and himself Panfilo. Woe is me! How often, when warmed with love and wine, did we tell tales, in the presence of our dearest friends, of Fiammetta and Panfilo, feigning that they were Greeks of the days of old, I at one time, he at another; and the tales were all of ourselves; how we were first caught in the snares of Love, and of what tribulations we were long the victims, giving suitable names to the places and persons connected with the story! Certainly, I frequently laughed at it all, being made merry by the simplicity of the bystanders, as well as by his astuteness and sagacity. Yet betimes I dreaded that in the flush of his excitement he might thoughtlessly let his tongue wander in directions wherein it was not befitting it should venture. But he, being ever far wiser than I imagined, guarded himself craftily from any such blundering awkwardness.

*Oimè!* most compassionate ladies, what is there that Love will not teach to his subjects? and what is there that he is not able to render them skilful in learning? I, who of all young women was the most simple-minded, and ordinarily with barely power to loose my tongue, when among my companions, concerning the most trivial and ordinary affairs, now, because of this my affection, mastered so speedily all his modes of speech that, in a brief space, my aptness at feigning and inventing surpassed that of any poet! And there were few questions put to me in response to which, after medita-

ting on their main points, I could not make up a pleasing tale: a thing, in my opinion, exceedingly difficult for a young woman to begin, and still more difficult to finish and relate afterward. But, if my actual situation required it, I might set down numerous details which might, perhaps, seem to you of little or no moment, as, for instance, the artful experiment whereby we tested the fidelity of my favorite maid to whom, and to whom alone, we meditated entrusting the secret of this hidden passion, considering that, should another share it, our uneasiness, lest it should not be kept, would be most grievous. Furthermore, it would weary you if I mentioned all the plans we adopted, in order to meet divers situations, plans that I do not believe were ever imagined by any before us; and albeit I am now well aware that they all worked for my ultimate destruction, yet the remembrance of them does not displease me.

Unless, O ladies, my judgment be greatly at fault, the strength of our minds was by no means small, if it be but taken in account how hard a thing it is for youthful persons in love to resist long the rush of impetuous ardor without crossing the bounds set by reason: nay, it was so great and of such quality that the most valiant of men, by acting in such wise, would win high and worthy laud as a result thereof. But my pen is now about to depict the final ending to which love was guided, and, before I do so, I would appeal to your pity and to those soft sentiments which make their dwelling in your tender breasts, and incline your thoughts to a like termination.

Day succeeded day, and our wishes dragged along with them, kept alive by torturing anxiety, the full bitterness whereof each of us experienced; although the one manifested this to the other in disguised language, and the other showed herself over-discreet to an excessive degree; all of which you who know how ladies

who are beloved behave in such circumstances will easily understand. Well, then, he, putting full trust in the veiled meaning of my words, and choosing the proper time and place, came to an experience of that which I desired as much as he, although I feigned the contrary. Certainly, if I were to say that this was the cause of the love I felt for him, I should also have to confess that every time it came back to my memory, it was the occasion to me of a sorrow like unto none other. But, I call God to witness, nothing that has happened between us had the slightest influence upon the love I bore him, nor has it now. Still, I will not deny that our close intimacy was then, and is now, most dear to me. And where is the woman so unwise as not to wish to have the object of her affection within reach rather than at a distance? How much more intensely does love enthrall us when it is brought so near us that we and it are made almost inseparable! I say, then, that after such an adventure, never afore willed or even thought of by me, not once, but many times did fortune and our adroit stratagems bring us good cheer and consolation, not indeed screened entirely from danger, for which I cared less than for the passing of the fleeing wind. But while the time was being spent in such joyous fashion—and that it was joyous, Love, who alone may bear witness thereof, can truly say—yet sometimes his coming inspired me with not a little natural apprehension, inasmuch as he was beginning to be indiscreet in the manner of his coming. But how dear to him was my own apartment, and with what gladness did it see him enter! Yet was he filled with more reverence for it than he ever had been for a sacred temple, and this I could at all times easily discern. Woe is me! what burning kisses, what tender embraces, what delicious moments we had there!

Why do I take such pleasure in the mere words which



I am now setting down? It is, I say, because I am forced to express the gratitude I then felt to the holy goddess who was the promiser and bestower of Love's delights. Ah, how often did I visit her altars and offer incense, crowned with a garland of her favorite foliage! How often did I think scornfully of the counsels of my aged nurse! Nay, furthermore, being elated far more than all my other companions, how often did I disparage their loves, saying within myself: "No one is loved as I am loved, no one loves a youth as matchless as the youth I love, no one realizes such delights from love as I!" In short, I counted the world as nothing in comparison with my love. It seemed to me that my head touched the skies, and that nothing was lacking to the culmination of my ecstatic bliss. Betimes the idea flashed on my mind that I must disclose to others the occasion of my transports, for surely, I would reflect, it would be a delight to others to hear of that which has brought such delight to me! But thou, O Shame, on the one side, and thou, O Fear, on the other, did hold me back: the one threatening me with eternal infamy; the other with loss of that which hostile Fortune was soon afterward to tear from me. In such wise then, did I live for some time, for it was then pleasing to Love that I should live in this manner; and, in good sooth, so blithely and joyously were these days spent that I had little cause to envy any lady in the whole world, never imagining that the delight wherewith my heart was filled to overflowing, was to nourish the root and plant of my future misery, as I now know to my fruitless and never-ending sorrow.

## CHAPTER II

*Wherein Madonna Fiammetta describes the cause of her lover's departure, his departure, and the grief his departure occasioned her*

**W**HILE, dearest ladies, I was leading the pleasant and jocund existence I have described above, little thinking of the future, hostile Fortune was stealthily brewing her poisons for me, and was pursuing me with relentless animosity, I being all the time unconscious of her enmity. It did not suffice her to have transformed me, who had aforetime been mistress of myself, into the servant of Love; as soon as she perceived that such service had become to me most delectable, she strove with all her might to scourge me with biting scorpions.

It befell that we were sitting one night on a couch in my chamber; it was cold, dark and rainy outside, but there was a bright light in one part of the room, and we were content to gaze at each other in silence, his eyes made glad by quaffing deep draughts from my beauty; and mine made equally glad by riveting their looks on his. After a time I spoke of various things, but he never took his eyes away from my face, as if he were intoxicated with the sweetness of what he saw, until at length his eyelids closed and he fell into a short slumber. And as I was observing him lovingly as he slept, my ears caught the sound of plaintive murmurs uttered by the lips of the lover so dear to me. Suddenly feeling alarmed about his health, I was on the point of saying: "What ails thee?" But a new idea occurred to me; I yielded to its suggestion, and kept silent. Then, with eyes intent and ears strained to cap-

ture the faintest whisper, I turned round, and, gazing at him cautiously, I listened. But no word of his came to me, although I knew from the sobs that racked him and from the tears that bathed his face that he must be in terrible agony. Alas! how impossible it would be to express what anguish wrung my heart when I saw him in such a state, and yet knew not the cause thereof! A thousand thoughts flashed through my mind in a moment, and they almost all centered in this one thing: he loves another lady, and it is against his will that he continues to visit me! The words leaped to my lips to ask him the occasion of his grief; but, afraid that he might be put to shame by discovering that I had found him in tears, I held my peace; and I also frequently turned away my eyes from looking at him, for I felt that the hot tears that rolled down my face and fell upon him would likewise, if he awoke suddenly, afford proof that I had seen him in such a state. Oh, what plans did I form, in my impatience, that he might not discover I had heard him, rejecting each as soon as formed! But at length, being overcome by the desire of knowing the cause of his affliction, just as those who have been appalled in their dreams either by a fall from a great height or by a cruel beast, start up in terror, both sleep and dream being at once broken, so I straightway started up as it were in terror, and, while my voice trembled, I laid one of my arms on his shoulder. My artifice was successful, for he, at once stopping his tears, and turning to me with an expression of infinite joy on his countenance, said, in a voice full of pity:

"O soul of my soul! what has made thee afraid?"

To which I responded:

"I fell asleep, and methought that I had lost thee."

Woe is me! what an augury and what true foretellers of the future were these my words so suddenly thrust

on my mind by some spirit from I know not where, and this I can now see plainly. But he made answer:

"O best and dearest of all women! death and death alone can make thee lose me."

Hardly had he uttered these words when he heaved a deep sigh. When I asked the occasion of his sighing thus, hoping thereby to learn also the cause of his tears, he burst into such a fit of weeping that the tears began to gush from his eyes as from two fountains, and to fall upon his breast even more copiously than before. Such a spectacle filled me with painful misgivings, and the uncertainty and anxiety of which I had for some time been the prey ended with me also in a burst of tears, while, on the other hand, his sobs prevented him from answering directly the question I had put to him. But, as soon as he felt that he had recovered somewhat from this excruciating spasm of emotion, in a voice choked and often rent with sobs, he thus replied:

"Dearest of women, loved by me beyond everything else in the world, if my tears merit any credit as witnesses of the truth, thou wilt surely believe that they are not shed without bitter cause, as the event which is about to happen must certainly prove to thee. The reason why my eyes pour forth their tears in such abundance, whenever the recollection of all the happiness that we have known together recurs to my memory, is that now this very recollection tortures me, with the added pang that I cannot make of myself two persons, as I would wish to do, so that I could at once satisfy my love by staying here, and the filial piety I owe to a father by going to a place whither the most stringent necessity summons me, together with all the force of paternal authority. Conceive, then, the anguish of my despairing heart! On the one hand, I am torn by filial piety from thine arms, and, on the other, I am retained therein by the soul-subduing might of love."

These words made their way into my wounded heart, and with them torments never felt before. And albeit their meaning was not at first clearly grasped by my understanding, yet when they smote mine ears and thereby effected a passage into my soul, they became the source of most agonizing tears, which, though they found a way of escape through mine eyes, left behind them in my heart an unendurable sense of utter woe. This was that hour when I felt that my pangs were more hostile to my pleasures than ever before; this was that hour which forced me to weep tears beyond measure, the like whereof had never by me been shed before, tears which neither his words nor his consolations could restrain. However, after I had wept most bitterly for a long time, I besought him, as well as I was able, to make clear to me what was the nature of that filial piety which, he said, tore him from my arms. Whereupon he, not without many a burst of tears, made this answer:

"Inevitable death, the ultimate end of all things, has decreed that I should be at the present moment the only son of my father, who lately had many sons. He is now laden with years, wifeless, and without any near relative remaining to him who would attend to the comfort of his declining years. He has no hope of having any more children, and he insists on the presence of that only son whom he has not seen for so many years, and from whom he expects affection and some consolation. For months have I been trying to discover every manner of excuse which, by holding me blameless, would permit me to ignore his commands and not forsake thee. Finally, I could see how utterly baseless and worthless were all these excuses. Every motive that can sway a mortal urges me to fulfil this duty. The days of my childhood, when I climbed his knees and was nursed tenderly on his lap, the love which he never afterward

ceased for a moment to show me, the just and proper filial obedience which I should always pay him, and other reasons more serious still, all conjure me not to defer my visit to him any longer. And, furthermore, the solemn entreaties and warnings of my friends and kindred have wrought upon me. They insist that, if I refuse to my father the solace of beholding me once more, I shall be the occasion of separating from his body his forlorn and disconsolate soul. Alas! how strong are the laws of nature! Mighty as is my love for thee, I have not been able, nor am I able, to allow it to replace entirely this filial piety. And so I have decided, with thy permission, to see him once more, and to afford him the consolation of my company for some little space of time, though I know not how I shall ever be able to live without thee, how brief soever the period of my absence may be; and, therefore, do my tears fall so fast when this I recall to mind."

And, after these words, he kept silence. If there be any of you, O ladies, for whose benefit I am now writing, whom such a disaster has befallen at the very moment when love engrossed her every thought, her alone do I expect to have understanding of the pangs that tortured my soul, which had until then fed wholly upon his love, and by that love had been violently inflamed; to other ladies I do not speak, for unless they have been tried as I have been, useless would be my telling them of that which nothing in their own lives has exemplified. I will say, then, in as brief fashion as possible, that when I heard these words, my soul sought to escape from me, and doubtless would have escaped, but that it was at the moment clasped in the arms of him it loved most on earth. But, nevertheless, it was so dazed with terror and smarting under such heavy affliction, that for a time I was bereft of the power of uttering a single word. But when, after a time, my

mind had grown somewhat accustomed to the endurance of a sorrow such as never before had been my portion, this very sorrow restored a little faint courage to my spirit, and the eyes which had been strained and tearless overflowed with moisture, and the tongue at length was loosed and capable of utterance; and turning to him who was the lord of my life, I thus addressed him:

"O thou who art my only refuge, my final hope! may my words enter thy heart with sufficient force to alter thy new purpose; so wilt thou continue to love me as thou hast loved me, and thy life and mine will not be exiled from this sad world before the hour appointed for our departure shall have come upon us. Thou, being drawn in different directions by filial piety and by love, art doubtful how thou shouldst act in the future. But surely, if the words were true in which thou didst formerly affirm, not once, but repeatedly, that I alone was loved by thee, no affection, filial or otherwise, should have power to withstand such love, or to take thee away elsewhere from my side; and now listen to the reason why this should be so. It must be clear to thee, if thou believest that which thou thyself sayest, to what peril thou must expose my life, if thou forsakest me, knowing, as thou dost, that I have been hardly able to endure any day heretofore upon which I was prevented from seeing thee. Therefore, thou mayest rest assured that, with thy absence, every comfort and pleasure of my life will vanish. And thinkest thou that this is the only calamity that shall befall me? Certainly, thou must be aware that every sorrow that can be imagined will beset me, and that these sorrows will, perhaps, or rather without any perhaps, surely slay me? Of a truth, thou must know how little strength there be in tender young women to endure such calamities with a firm mind. Shouldst thou haply wish to answer

that I, when first I loved thee, had to endure things as heavy to bear, I will in part agree with thee, but the cause of that was very different from this. As my hope depended on the exercise of my own will, that which could then be borne easily will press grievously on me when dependent on the will of another. Who has ever thwarted my desire when I wished eagerly for thy companionship, because I was enamored of thee as thou wert of me? Surely, no one. But things will shape themselves very differently when thou art far away from me. Moreover, at that time I knew only by sight who thou wert, although, even so, I set a high value on thee. But now that I know thee most intimately, because of the closeness of the ties we have formed, now that thou hast grown infinitely dearer to me than thou wert when only my imagination was engaged, surely thou hast become mine as certainly as any lover can be who owes as much to his lady as thou dost to me. And who doubts that it is heavier affliction to lose that which one has than to lose that which one hopes to have, even though there be a prospect of this hope being realized.

"For this reason, then, it must be plainly evident to thee, if thou givest the matter due consideration, that thy departure will be followed by my death. Art thou prepared, then, to bring about my destruction by placing thy affection for thine aged father higher than the affection which thou art bound to have for me? If thou attest in this wise, thou art not a lover, but an enemy. Shame upon thee! even if I consented to it, to set a higher value upon the few years reserved for an old parent than upon the many years which I may reasonably hope to enjoy! Alas! how iniquitous would be such filial piety as that! Is it not thy conviction, O Panfilo, that no one, however nearly related to thee by the ties of parentage or blood or friendship, is either



willing or able to love thee as I love thee? If for a moment thou believest differently, thou believest wrongly; for, of a truth, no one loves thee as I do. If I, therefore, love thee more than anyone else, do I not merit more affection? For this reason, then, do thou resolve to award me the preference, and in mercy to me, banish from thy bosom all that piety, as thou callest it, which may hamper the love thou owest me, and let thy father take his repose without thee. He has lived long without thee in the past; let him so live hereafter, if it likes him, and, if not, let him die! He has for many years warded off the fatal stroke, if what I have heard be true, and his existence has been prolonged beyond the period at which it would be seemlier to die. Furthermore, if he live, as the aged are wont to live, weary and discontented, it will show greater filial piety in thee to let him die than to prolong a burdensome life by thy presence. But thou shouldst rather think of affording consolation to me, who have never been long away from thee since first we met, who cannot live without thee, and who, being still exceedingly youthful, may hope to spend many joyous years in thy society. In good sooth, if thou couldst work that change in thy father which the potent medicaments of Medea wrought in Æson, then should I say that this piety of thine was righteous, and, I would laud thy going for such a purpose, however grievous it might be to me. But such will not and could not be the result of thy departure, and that thou knowest well. Now surely thou art haply more cruel than I believe thee to be, if thou carest so little for me, whom thou hast loved and lovest now of thy own free election and not in any wise forced thereunto, as to prefer the indifferent affection of an old man whom chance has made thy parent. But, if thou takest no pity on me, at least take pity on thyself. Is it not true—unless, indeed, thy features first, and thy words after-

ward have deceived me—that, when I was away from thee even for a short space of time, my absence was almost like death to thee? Dost thou, then, now believe that thou canst live without seeing me during the long absence which this ill-starred piety of thine must entail? Oh, in God's name, consider the matter attentively and reflect whether it be not possible that this very journey may not bring about thine own death (if it be true that men, like women, die of a lasting sorrow). That thy absence from me will be very hard for thee to endure, thy tears and the throbbing of thy heart, the irregular and violent beating whereof I hear distinctly, afford plain demonstration. But should death fail to smite thee, a life far worse than death is the life that awaits thee.

“Alas! how my enamored heart is overflowing with pity for thee as well as for myself at the present moment! Be not so foolish, I beseech thee, as to let thy affection for any person, whosoever he may be, move thee to expose thyself to a serious danger! Think that whoso loves not himself has the lordship of nothing in the world. Thy father, for whom thy affection is so intense, did not beget thee to the end that thou mightest do ill unto thyself. And who doubts but that he, inasmuch as he is wise, if it were allowed him to discover our condition, would say to thee: “Remain where thou art”? Nay, if his wisdom did not lead him to this decision, his compassion for thee assuredly should; and I am quite certain that thou knowest this thyself. Therefore do thou reason thus: Inasmuch as such is the judgment he would have given, had he known our case, we are bound to assume that he has known our case and that he has given this judgment; and so by his own very award, thou art, as it were, forced to abandon this journey, which would be equally hurtful to thee and to me. Certainly, dear my lord, I will not deny

that thine aforesaid arguments are powerful enough to lead thee to imagine that it is thy duty to be guided by them and go to the place whither they would lead thee, considering that, if thou goest thither, thou goest to the spot where thou wert born, a spot naturally dearer than all others to everyone. And yet, from what I have heard thee often say, thou hast found this same place somewhat wearisome and uninteresting. The cause thereof, as thou thyself hast already and freely admitted, is that thy city is a city of ostentatious words and pusillanimous deeds, the slave, not of a thousand laws, but rather of as many different opinions as there are men therein, and its people are always at war, either with strangers or with one another, and that this same city of thine is inhabited by an arrogant, avaricious and envious race, and that its turbulence is the occasion of numberless anxieties to those who dwell therein—all which things are entirely out of harmony with thy cast of mind. And right well am I aware that, on the other hand, the city thou art so ready to forsake is known by thee to be peaceful, joyous, rich, magnificent, and under the rule of one king; all which things, if I be not very much mistaken, are exceedingly agreeable to thee. Furthermore, and more important than everything stated: I am here, and here only wilt thou find me, and nowhere else. Therefore, I beseech thee, abandon this most calamitous purpose of thine, and, by entirely changing thine intention and remaining where thou art, prove that thou hast a care for my life and for thine own as well."

While I spoke, his agitation went on increasing, and his cheeks were bathed in tears. At length, after heaving many a heart-breaking sigh, he answered thus:

"O life and light of my soul, well assured I am that all the words thou hast uttered are true, and every peril which they unfold is to me as clear as day. But as I must answer, not as I should wish, but as the present

necessity requires, I will say briefly that, inasmuch as I am now able to blot out a long and great debt at the cost of a short and trifling discomfort, I believe that thou thyself wilt acknowledge I ought to do so. Thou mayest rest assured that, while my affection for my aged father exercises over my mind its due and rightful power, I am not less, but much more, swayed by the love we feel for each other. Now, if it were lawful to make public this love, I might seem to have some excuse, assuming that what thou hast said were submitted to the judgment, not of my father only, but of anyone whatever; and in that case, I might allow my parent to die without seeing me. But, admitting that this love of ours must be concealed from the eyes of the world, I do not see how I could act as thou wishest without incurring the gravest censure and infamy. If I escape such censure and fulfil my duty, Fortune will, it is true, deprive us of three or four months of rapturous delight. Afterward, however, thou wilt see me return to thy presence without fail, and our happiness will only be the greater because of this separation. And if the place to which I am going be as disagreeable as thou makest it out to be, this should cheer thee greatly, for thou art sure to have this consolation: if no other cause should prompt me to move away from thence, the character of a place so offensive to my mind would alone be sufficient to compel me to abandon it and return here. Therefore I will beg thy gracious permission to leave thee for a time; and as thou hast ever shown thyself hitherto solicitous for my honor and wellbeing, so now show thy patience; then shall I be sure, from the manner in which thou hast borne thyself during this most grievous visitation, that my honor will be as safe with thee, no matter to what trial it may be exposed in the future, as my person is dear to thee now."

When he had spoken these words, and was for a time silent, I thus resumed:

"It is very plain to my mind that thy resolution has been adopted with much reluctance and regret. And yet, methinks that thou seemest to avoid reflecting on all the pangs and agonies that must torture my heart when thou art so far away. No day, no night, no hour, will creep past me unattended by a thousand fears; I shall be in continual alarm about thy life, which I beseech God to extend far beyond the limit of my days. Ah! why do I wish to dwell upon such things? Yet am I forced to enumerate some of them as briefly as may be. The seas are not as full of sands, nor the heavens of stars, as every day is of the countless dangers and disasters that may befall living creatures; and my forebodings of what may betide thee when thou hast left me will be the occasion of constant suffering to my heart, which will never cease trembling because of thee. I am ashamed to tell thee that which has now flashed across my mind, but since certain things I have heard force me to speak, I shall do so. Now, I have been told, and that frequently, that in thy native country there are an infinite number of most beautiful ladies, as graceful and refined as they are beautiful, in every way fit to love and be loved. If one of these should please thee, and if thou shouldst forget me for her sake, what sort of life dost thou imagine mine would be then? Ah, if thou truly lovest me, as thou sayest thou dost, bethink thee how thou wouldst feel if I changed thee for another lover? A thing, indeed, which never can be. Rather would I slay myself with my own hands than that that should betide me! But let us banish such thoughts, and not provoke the gods by gloomy predictions of that which neither of us would wish to happen. But if thou art still firmly determined to depart, inasmuch as nothing can ever please me which is not pleasing to thee also, I

have resolved, constrained thereunto by necessity, to will what thou willest. Nevertheless, if it can be, I beseech thee that thou grant this one last prayer: delay thy going for a while; so shall I be able, by continual meditations on thy departure, to teach myself strength and endurance when thou art no longer beside me. Surely this should not be a hard thing for thee to do; even the very weather, which at this season is most detestable, pleads in favor of my request. Seest thou not that the heavens are continually darkened and menace the earth with most baleful evils by means of water, snow, winds, and appalling thunder? Is there a man in the whole world so little careful of himself as to set out on a journey at such a horrible time? Therefore, in this, at least, indulge me, or, if thou refusest to do so, then do that which thy duty to thyself demands. Let this noxious season pass, and wait for the next, when thou canst travel with less peril; and I, though I may be consumed by melancholy thoughts, yet will look forward to thy return more patiently."

He made no delay in replying:

"O best and dearest of women! May the joyous hope of my return moderate the various anxieties and bitter pain in which I leave thee, greatly against my own desire, and may it also lighten the agonies I suffer because of this separation. But it is by no means wise of thee to let thy mind dwell on that which will most surely seize upon me, here or elsewhere, when my hour has come—namely, death. Nor shouldst thou trouble thyself anent future happenings, about which we know nothing, and which may be a help or a hurt to me. In what place soever the anger or the favor of God may light upon man, he must endure his fate, be it good or evil, because he has no power to do otherwise. Therefore, do not concern thyself about such things, but let them rest in the hands of Him who knows our needs

better than we do ourselves, and simply implore Him so to order future events that they may turn out for our benefit. As to my belonging to any other lady except Fiammetta, not Jove himself could bring such a change to pass, even though I should desire it; for the chain wherewith Love has bound my heart under thy heavenly governance can never be rent asunder. And of this be well assured: sooner shall the earth give birth to stars, and the sky be plowed by oxen and bring forth the ripe corn, than Panfilo belong to other lady than thee. The time I have set for leaving would I postpone even with more eagerness than thou hast shown in asking me to do so, if I believed for a moment that such delay would be useful to thee and to me. But the greater the delay, the greater would be our sorrow at parting. If I go away now, I shall have returned before the lapse of the very period which thou requirest in order that thou mayest prepare thyself for the suffering which my absence will entail. But the bitterness of knowing that the time was coming when I must leave thee would, in truth, be harder to bear than my going now. And against the inclemency of the weather I will take salutary precautions, although I was once accustomed to endure it. Fear not that God who watched over my coming hither will not also watch over my going hence. Therefore, with a brave heart, make up thy mind to this: when a thing must be done, it is better that it should be done at once than to look forward to the doing of it in fear and sadness."

My tears, which had almost ceased to flow when I was speaking myself, now burst forth with renewed violence on hearing a reply so different from what I expected; and, with my head resting heavily on his breast, I remained silent for a long time, revolving various matters in my mind, not knowing whether I should assent to the truth of what he said or deny it. But, alas! what

reply could anyone have made to such words, except: "Do what it likes thee, but return soon?" And I, not without excessive anguish and the shedding of many tears, added that it would be undoubtedly a great marvel if he found me living on his return. These words having been said, we tried to comfort each other and dried each other's tears and then parted

He came often to see me before his departure, which was to take place in a few days, finding me much altered in mind and appearance from what I had been when he saw me first. But when that fatal day arrived which was to be the end of all my happiness, we spent it in various discourse, not unmingled with abundant tears. At last I embraced him, and thus addressed him:

"Alas! my sweet lord, who is it that is thus taking thee away from me? What god wreaks his vengeance on me with such overwhelming force that it can be said, and I live to hear it: 'No longer is Panfilo in the spot where his Fiammetta abides?' I know nothing even of the place whither thou goest! When shall I embrace thee again? My heart is wrung with direful forebodings, yet I wit not what they portend."

Then, somewhat soothed by his caresses, though still weeping bitterly, I kissed him. When he was about to give me the last tearful embrace, I arrested him, saying:

"Dearest my lord, lo, now thou goest away, but thou dost promise that in a short time thou wilt return. Pledge me for this, if it so please thee, thy most inviolable faith, so that, although I doubt not thy word, I may gain future strength and comfort therefrom."

Thereupon, he, mingling his tears with mine, hung on my neck, as I believe, from utter faintness, and said, in a weak voice.

"Lady, I swear to thee by Apollo, and by the indissoluble love I bear thee, and by that very piety which now separates us, that, before the fourth month has run



its course, thou wilt surely, if God permit, see me at thy side."

Thereafter, taking my right hand in his, he turned to the place where the sacred images of our gods were displayed, and said:

"O ye holy gods, rulers of Earth and Heaven equally, be ye witness of my present vow and of the faith sanctioned by my right hand. And thou, O Love, who art conscious of all that has happened, be present, and thou, too, O sanctuary of love, dearer to me than the heavenly abodes of the gods, be ye all witnesses of this my vow! And, if I should sin in aught against my oath, then may God afflict me with a punishment as dire as that wherewith in past times Ceres pursued Erisichthon, or Diana, Actæon, or Juno, Semele."

Having spoken, he covered my face with kisses, and bade me farewell, in a voice that shook with agony. But when he had said these words, I felt so woebegone and so entirely exhausted with weeping that I could hardly utter a syllable. Yet made I a mighty effort, and a few words forced themselves from my pallid lips:

"May the vows which my ears have heard, and which thy hand in mine has confirmed, be ratified by Jove in Heaven, as were the prayers of Teletusa by Isis, and may they be as irrevocable on earth as thou demandest and as I desire."

After which, I accompanied him to the door of my palace, wishing there to bid him a last adieu, when suddenly my tongue failed to do its office, and the light of day fled from my eyes. Like a rose that had been cut level with the earth, and which loses its color when it feels the warmth of the solar rays, so did I fall, almost lifeless, into the arms of my faithful attendant; and not until the lapse of many moments was I recalled to this pitiless world by my devoted servant, who sprinkled cold water on my face and who exerted all her ingenuity

to revive me. Then, hoping that he might still be at my door, like the maddened bull, which, when it has received the fatal stroke, wildly leaps into the air, so I, rising as if thunderstricken, and still almost blinded, rushed forward, and, with open arms, embraced my servant, believing that I had my lord within my arms, and, in a feeble voice, broken by sobs, I said:

"O soul of my soul, farewell!"

My servant spake not, witting my mistake; but I, when I had regained consciousness, and saw into what an error I had fallen, could hardly restrain myself from being beguiled into the same illusion afterward.

When I saw again myself in my chamber without my Panfilò, and not knowing how this could be so for such a length of time, asked my servant what had become of him, she, weeping, replied:

"It is now a long while since he tore himself from your arms, in spite of his tears and yours."

To which I answered:

"Then, of a truth, is he gone?"

"Yes," replied the servant.

Thereupon, being anxious to learn more, I said:

"How looked he when he left?"

"Heartbroken, in good sooth," she answered. Never in my life have I seen man so utterly disconsolate."

"What were his gestures, what his movements, what the words he uttered at the time of his departure?"

"When you lay almost lifeless in my arms, uttering incoherent words about I know not what, he, as soon as he saw you, took you from me and clasped you in his arms with ineffable tenderness. Dismayed, lest your trembling soul should have deserted its tenement, he laid his hand on your breast, and discovered by the wild throbbings of your heart that you lived. Then he kissed you, as if every kiss were the last, and, returning, kissed you again and again. But when he saw that you were

seemingly as soulless as marble, he dreaded that the greatest of all afflictions had befallen him, and, with heartrending sobs, he showered kisses on your face, saying: 'O ye high gods, if there be any sin in my departure, let your vengeance fall on me, and not on this sweet lady! Bring back to its dwelling-place the wandering soul, so that it may enjoy the last consolation of seeing me before I leave and of giving me the farewell kiss, wherewith both she and I may be comforted.' But when he saw that you remained still unconscious, although his agitation was so extreme that he hardly knew what he was doing, he took you in his arms and placed you gently on the couch. Then, as the waves of the sea now retreat and now return to the shore, driven hither and thither by the resistless force of the winds, so he retreated, and then returned, and returned and retreated again and again, but always withdrawing slowly from the threshold of your chamber. Sometimes he looked up to the threatening skies, which warned him not to delay his going; then he turned and gazed upon you, repeatedly calling you by name and kissing your face again and again. But, after he had done so frequently, seeing that he could stay no longer with you, he embraced you and said: 'O sweetest of all women! Sole hope of my broken heart! I must leave thee for a time, although I know that, by doing so, I endanger thy life! Oh, may God relieve thee from the pain thou dost now suffer, and grant that we may see each other again with as much joy as we now feel sorrow at this bitter parting.' And, while he was speaking these words, his tears so often ended in convulsive sobs that I was alarmed lest he should be heard, not only by our own people, but by our neighbors. But, feeling that he must depart, he again said farewell, weeping the while more bitterly than ever. And, as if drawn thither by force, he would sometimes plant his foot on the threshold of your house, and

anon rush wildly forth from it. And when he had gone a few paces, he would stop, and it seemed as if he could hardly go further; for at every step he would look back, apparently hoping that you had recovered and that I would call him back to look upon you again."

Having said which, my servant held her peace. And, O ladies, what, think you, must have been my state after the departure of my lover, whose absence was to cause me so many bitter pangs!

### CHAPTER III

*Wherein are set forth the thoughts and deeds of this lady during the time at the end whereof she expected her lover to return*

**I**N doleful plight did I remain after the departure of my Panfilo, and, day after day, the tears I shed, because of his absence, were very bitter. Nor did other words come to my lips—words never uttered withal—than these: “O my Panfilo! can it be that thou hast forsaken me?” Yet, amid all my anguish, the recollection of that name whereby he had taught me to address him, afforded me a little consolation. There was no part of my chamber which escaped the glance of my insatiate eyes: “Here,” I would say to myself, “my Panfilo was wont to sit; here he used to recline; here he vowed a speedy return to me; here I kissed him.” In short, there was not a spot in the room that was not dear to me. Sometimes I feigned to myself that he was coming to see me once more, having changed his purpose and turned back. Then, as if he were really come, I would suddenly gaze at the entrance, so cheated by my fancy that, because he was not there, I frequently fell into a rage, as if, though so near me, he had of a truth forsaken and deceived me.

As soon as the dull misery caused by his late departure began to be somewhat alleviated by the interposition of time, certain ideas of a more serious nature made their way into my mind, and, once they had entered, they asserted the lawfulness of their presence by much plausible reasoning. So, happening to be alone in my chamber, not long afterward, I began arguing with myself in the following fashion: “Behold thy lover has now gone from thy side, and thou, wretched woman that

thou art, wert not only unable to bid him farewell, but even to return the kisses he bestowed on thy unconscious lips, or cast thine eyes upon him when, for the last time, he crossed the threshold of thy home; all which, should aught of ill befall him, he may regard as the consequence of a fatal augury portentously forecast by thy silence, and on thee may lay the blame thereof." At first, this thought bore very heavily on my soul: but at length, it made way for another reflection, and, after deeply reconsidering the matter, I said to myself: "No, no blame can fall upon me by reason of this, inasmuch as he, being a person of great wisdom, will, on the contrary, deem the things that occurred to be of happy augury rather, saying: 'She did not bid me the sort of adieu that one is wont to address to those who purpose to be absent for a long period, or haply not to return at all. But, by keeping silent, she showed she regarded my absence from her as being for such an exceedingly brief period as scarcely to be considered a separation.'" After I had turned this thought over and over in my mind, and gained therefrom a little comfort, I dismissed it entirely, and fixed my attention on various new ideas. Sometimes, when solitary and sad in my chamber, all my thoughts dwelling on him, I strode to and fro, and, fetching many a sigh, murmured: "Would that my Panfilo were here!"

In this way, torn now here, now there, by conflicting emotions, did I pass several days, yet ever hoping for his safe arrival in his native city, and of this I was afterward made certain by a letter from him, which yielded me the greatest delight on many accounts, and made known to me that he was inflamed with a love for me more ardent than ever; furthermore, the most solemn promises wherewith he bound himself quickened my hopes of his speedy return. Yet could I not help dreading what the future might portend. Nay, from that very

hour, the thoughts which had grievously occupied my mind took their departure, and new ones suddenly sprang into existence in their place. "Now," I would sometimes say, "is Panfilo, sole surviving son of an aged father, welcomed with every species of jocund festivity by him who has not beheld him for many years. Haply, he may have not only banished me from his memory, but may even curse the months during which love retained him at my side. Now, being greatly honored by this friend, now by that friend, perchance he blames me for not having even known how to love him befittingly when he was here. Festive minds that keep high holiday are apt to be easily persuaded to sever their connection with one place and bind themselves to another. Woe is me! What would become of me, if in such a manner I should lose him? But I will not believe that such a calamity can be possible." Often was my soul, as if prescient of its future woes, held prisoner by such a dreadful terror that it trembled to its very center, and this terror gave rise to such thoughts as these: "Panfilo is now in his native city, a city enriched with many most sumptuous temples, and made gorgeous by its stately and magnificent festivals and pageants, at the which he is frequently present, and there no doubt he has become acquainted with a great number of ladies, who, as I have often heard, are beyond expression beautiful, and in grace and refinement surpass all others, so that there be none in the world so bounteously supplied with the snares and wiles wherewith hearts are caught. Alas! who is there that can so warily guard himself as not to be forcibly captured some time or other, no matter how strong be his resistance? Do I not know how I myself was captured as it were by main force? And over and above this withal, new things are wont to please more than the old: therefore, it would be no strange matter that he should please them, being new,

and that they should please him for the like reason."

How grievously did such imaginings depress me! And, albeit I believed that no such awful disaster would befall me, yet could I not drive these ideas from my mind, though often saying to myself:

"How could Panfilo, who loves thee more than himself, harbor in a heart, which thou dost entirely fill, another love? Knowest thou not that a certain lady in this city in every way worthy of him, used her utmost efforts to gain his affection, and yet could not succeed? Most assuredly, there are many ladies whom he might well have wooed before he became thine, as he has been now for a long time, and if he passed by those, who were regarded as goddesses because of their beauty and their many charms, certainly, he cannot be so soon enamored now of others as thou sayest. Furthermore, dost thou for a moment believe that he would break the faith so often pledged thee for another? Never would he do so; and, therefore, in his loyalty and prudence thou mayest have full confidence. If thou art reasonable thou must consider that he is not so unwise as not to know that he acts like a madman who forsakes that which he has in order to gain that which he has not, unless, indeed, that which he had was of exceedingly little account, and, by forsaking it, he gained something of infinitely greater value. Now, if thou reflectest deeply on the matter, thou must conclude infallibly that such a thing could not happen in the present circumstance. For, in truth, if what thou hast heard men say be sooth, thou must be the loveliest among lovely ones, and among the wealthy one of the wealthiest, and among the nobly born, one of the noblest. And, in addition to this, whom could he ever find who would love him as thou dost love him? He, as having had great experience thereof, knows how exceeding hard it be to prevail on a lady, who may happily have become dear to a new lover, to allow herself to



be loved; for ladies, even when they do love, are very coy, and will for a long time feign the opposite to that which is in their hearts. Nay, even if he did not love thee, he is at the present moment too much occupied with other weighty matters that are of the greatest moment to his interests to have leisure for forming intimacies with other ladies. Therefore, do thou cease troubling thyself about this, but rather esteem it as certain that thou art as deeply loved as thou lovest."

Few mornings passed that I did not, immediately after I had risen, ascend to the loftiest part of my palace, and thence, just as sailors, after climbing to the maintopmast, cast their eyes round intently to learn whether there be a high rock, or land, or any other impediment to their course, did I carefully scan the entire heavens. Then, fixing my gaze steadily on the east, when the sun had risen above the horizon, I calculated how much of the new day had elapsed; and, the higher I saw him in the sky, "The nearer," I said, "does the term appointed for the return of my Panfilo approach." Sometimes as I eagerly watched his course, I told myself that he was going more leisurely than was his wont, and that he spent more days in Capricornus than he was used to do in Cancer; and so, in the same wise, when he had attained the middle point of his circuit, I fancied that he, of his own accord, stood still for the purpose of taking a view of the earth, and, how swiftly soever he sank in the west, meseemed that he progressed but slowly. When he had taken away his light from the world, and when he permitted the stars to show forth their radiance, I, somewhat reconciled thereto, often numbering within myself the days that were passed, marked that one with a little stone, being minded thereunto by the custom of the ancients, who were in the habit of dividing their pleasant days from their irksome days by white and black pebbles.

Making a supreme effort to dispel these workings of my mind, I sometimes opened one of my chests, and took up the numerous letters he had sent me, and having read them all, I felt not a little comforted, for I could almost fancy that I was holding discourse with him.

When the day had guided the hours to their appointed end, fresh anxieties disquieted me. I, who since ever I was a child, could not remain alone in the dark unterrified, had felt safe and bold therein when love kept me company. And, just as I was wont to ascend to the highest part of my palace, long before the slumbers of my people were broken, and when the morning had first beheld the advent of the sun, so did I, like unto Arunte, when watching the celestial bodies and their motions amid the marble quarries of the Lucanian hills, so did I, I repeat, from that spot observe the heavens during the tedious and fear-inspiring hours of the night, because the various cares whereby I was pursued were most unfriendly to my yearning for repose; and I regarded the motions of the orbs I observed, however quick they might be, as exceeding tardy. And, night after night, turning my eyes on the horned moon, I deemed, not that she was approaching her fulness, but rather that her horns grew thinner one night after the other. And the more eager my anxiety, the more did I wish that she would sweep on apace and round out her four quarters. And oh, how often, even though chilled by her frosted beams, did I gaze long and steadily on her face, imagining that haply the eyes of Panfilo were, like mine, riveted at that very moment on her pale disk! But now I doubt not, that, having banished every thought of me from his mind, he was so far from fixing his eyes on the moon, that he was, on the contrary, resting on his couch, his eyes closed in untroubled slumber. And I also remember that, being exasperated by the slowness of her

course, I tried to hasten it by many supplications, being thereunto instigated by my trust in various errors of ancient times, hoping that so she might attain her perfect roundness. When she had attained it, methought that she seemed not to care to return to her crescent form as rapidly as it behooved her, but rather, as if content with the fulness of her brightness, to wish to abide in that fulness; and yet for this I sometimes almost held her excused, deeming it must be pleasanter for her to stay with her mother than return to the dark realms of her spouse. Notwithstanding this, I remember that often my wasted prayers to her to hasten her course would turn into threats, and I would say:

"O Phœbe! ill dost thou reward the services thou receivest! I, with most piteous beseechings, am taking what pains I may to curtail thy labors, yet thou, by thy slothful delaying, carest not if thou increasest mine. If haply, however, thou needest more help from me to move away and return with thy horns only, then, of a truth, thou dost deem me to be as slothful as I surely discern that thou art. Now, knowest thou not that the sooner thou showest thyself four times crescent-shaped, and then in thy full roundness, the sooner will my Panfilo be with me again? In sooth, let him but return, and afterward thou mayest speed through thy circles as leisurely or as swiftly as it liketh thee!"

When blackest clouds obscured the skies and stormy tempests affrighted the air with their thunderous roar, I descended from my post, and, if nothing else occurred to me to do, I betook myself to my chamber. Thither I summoned my attendants, and passed the time in relating, or in having related, divers stories. And the farther the tales of my maidens were from the truth—a thing to be expected from most people of their condition—the greater seemed their power to drive away my sighs and bring some delectation to me as I listened;

so that, occasionally, nathless all my melancholy, I laughed most joyously.

At other times, I feigned to myself that Panfilo was with me, and, so feigning, I said many things to him and asked him many questions; to these questions I replied, feigning to myself that the answers were from him and not from me; and it sometimes betided that, in the middle of such imagined discourse, I fell asleep. And certainly such sleep was much more welcome to me than wakefulness, inasmuch as I truly then beheld him whom I had feigned to be with me when lying awake. Sometimes methought he had returned and I was wandering along with him in most beautiful gardens, adorned with the rarest of fruits, flowers, and foliage, as if unalarmed of aught, as we were wont to be of old; and there, while he held my hand and I his, I made him recount everything that had happened to him, and often, before he concluded a phrase, meseemed that I broke the words in two with a kiss, and, as if all that I saw was real, I said: "What! thou hast, in good sooth, returned, then? Certainly, thou hast, and now I hold thee forever!"

Oh, how vexatious it was to me when it betided that sleep forsook me! For it bore away with itself that which freely and of its own accord it had lent me. Yet though for a time I remained very sad; nor did I spend the remainder of the day following in such content, always looking forward to the return of night, to the end that I might have that, when asleep, which I could not have when awake. Still, albeit on some nights sleep was most gracious to me, on others it ordained that I should not enjoy the sweetness thereof unmixed with the bitterness of affliction, inasmuch as there were many of these nights in which meseemed to behold my lover garbed in the vilest sort of raiment, all stained with spots so black that I never knew the like. With features deadly pale, and quivering with anguish, he ap-

peared to me to be running toward me and shrieking aloud: "Help me! help me!" At other times, methought I heard a number of persons speak of him as of one who was dead; and at others, it befell that I beheld him dead before my very eyes; at others, he assumed many and various forms that were to me singular. But at no time did my sleep have greater strength than my sorrow, so that, suddenly awaking and witting at once the vanity of my dreaming, I was content with my dream, and thanked God therefor.

In such manner did I pass the days and nights, anxiously expectant of an end to my sorrows. But when the time appointed for his return drew nearer, I judged it wise to change my mode of life, to take heart and be of good cheer, to the end that my beauties and graces, somewhat injured by my many and long-endured sufferings, might be restored to their due places, and that I, when he again beheld me, might not be displeasing to him through any lack of comeliness. I found this not at all difficult to accomplish, seeing that, having been so long accustomed to troubles, I was now able to bear them, if not lightly, yet without much labor; and, furthermore, the hope of his promised return, having now become stronger, inspired me every day with an ever-increasing gladness to which I had long been a stranger. The festive entertainments which I had almost suspended, assigning as a cause thereof the inclement weather, I now resumed at the beginning of the new season. As the soul long engulfed in the bitterness of grievous woes expands when it exchanges a life of pain for a life of pleasure, so I seemed to my companions more beautiful now than I ever had seemed before. My costly attire and my precious ornaments I tried to render more magnificent than when I first wore them; and, like the valiant knight, who, when need requires, polishes and repairs his strong arms for the future combat, so I made

ready to appear to him more splendidly vested and more nobly adorned on his return, a return for which I, the most deceived of women, was to wait in vain.

Woe is me! how often did I say: "As soon as he is within reach of my arms, I shall kiss him a hundred thousand times, and thereafter my kisses will be so multiplied that no word will they allow to pass his lips; and twice a hundred-fold will I return those which he showered on my face as I lay unconscious in his arms, without power to give him back a single one" Frequently I doubted in my thoughts, whether I should be able to restrain my insatiable longing to embrace him the very moment I perceived him, no matter who might then be present. But of all these things the gods had a care, and so ordered them that they should all work together for my greater desolation. Whenever I happened to be in my chamber, and some one entered, how often did I believe that she had come to say to me: "Panfilo has returned" Nay, never did I hear words uttered in any place that my ears were not at once bent to catch them, I thinking or hoping that they must in some way be concerned with the approaching arrival of Panfilo. When seated, I started up more than a hundred times, and, running to the window, pretending to be curious about something or other, I gazed up and down, saying to myself in my folly: "Panfilo has arrived and is coming now to see thee." And, after a while, discovering how vain was my hope, I returned to my room in confusion. Feigning that when he came back, he was to bring with him certain things for my husband of the greatest value, I often asked, and directed others to ask, whether he had returned, or whether he was expected, and when. But to these questions no comforting answer ever reached me, no more than if he were never more to come, as of a truth so it betided.

## CHAPTER IV

*Wherein this lady sheweth what her thoughts were like and what her life was like, the appointed day having come and Panfilo not returned*

**T**ORMENTED by these anxieties, compassionate ladies, I not only reached the much desired and long expected period, but passed beyond it by several days. Still was I uncertain whether I should blame him or not for this delay, although my former hopefulness was somewhat weakened, and I partly abandoned the cheerful thought which I had perhaps too amply entertained. Fresh ideas, which had not been there before, began to flit through my brain; and arresting for the time the tendency that was in my mind to learn what was or what could be the reason why Panfilo was delaying his return longer than he had solemnly promised, I began to have other conceptions. Above aught else, I discovered as many circumstances that should plead in his excuse as he himself would have been able to discover, were he present, and, perchance, more. I would sometimes say

“O Fiammetta, for shame! Wherefore dost thou believe that thy Panfilo has other cause for staying away from thee and not returning, except that it is no longer in his power to act as he would wish? Unforeseen calamities are often visited on the heads of others as well as on thine; nor is it so possible to fulfil the conditions of a compact made for the future as some believe. Now, why should I doubt that he feels his affection for me here more binding than even the filial piety which has detained him yonder? Sure I am, and exceeding sure, that he loves me to excess, and is now thinking of the

bitterness of my life, and has great ruth thereof; and, incited by his love, has often wished to come away. But haply his aged parent has, by his tears and prayers, a little prolonged the term, and, thwarting his desires, has retained him almost by force. He will come when he can."

And by these arguments and excuses I was frequently forced to admit into my mind other newer and more grievous ideas. Sometimes I said:

"Who knows but that he, more eager than he even ought to be for a sight of me, laying aside all his filial devotion and abandoning all his other affairs, may have long ago moved away from his native city? And then, perchance, not waiting until the tempestuous sea was becalmed, and credulous of the tales lying and foolhardy mariners tell in hope of gain, he has embarked on some boat, which, having incurred the wrath of the winds and of the waves, has perished amid the latter, and he with it. In no other way was the hapless Hero bereaved of her Leander. Or who can even tell but that he may have, perchance, been thrust by fortune on some inhospitable rock, and, having escaped thither from the fury of the waters, has died of famine or by the teeth of ferocious beasts? Or may he not be still upon that very rock, like another Achemenides, left there, perhaps because forgotten, and watching despairingly for some one to take him away and bring him hither? For who is there that is not aware of the manifold treacheries of the deep? But haply, on the other hand, he has fallen into the power of his enemies, or has been captured by pirates, and now languishes in some prison or other, loaded with fetters and shackles. For all such things can happen, and we have already perceived them to happen many a time."

Then I recollected that his journey might be no safer by land than by sea, and I saw that if he had adopted



that mode of traveling, he might also have been detained by a thousand accidents. Thereupon my mind, as if with a rush, leaped upon the anticipation of still more fearful disasters, and my excuses for his absence grew the stronger in proportion to the perils by which I believed him surrounded.

Alas! while such imaginings absorbed my mind, a cold sweat covered my whole body, and, aghast at such fearful thoughts, I prayed God to take them away from me, for I saw him with my very eyes exposed to all the perils I had conjured up, neither more nor less than if they were real. And sometimes I remember that I wept bitterly, having undoubted faith that I beheld him in some one of the evil straits which I had pictured to myself. Then, after a while, I would murmur:

"Wretched me! what horrible things are those which my wayward fancy presents to my vision? God forbid that any of them should ever turn out true! Rather would I desire that he should continue to dwell where he is now, and never again return to me, than that any of these misfortunes which I have falsely imagined, should befall him. And, in good sooth, I have deceived myself; seeing that, albeit such things are possible, it is not possible that such things can long be hidden; and certainly it is not possible that the death of such an illustrious person could be kept concealed, and from me most especially, who, by means of devices not a little adroit and subtle, have had such searching and continuous inquiries made about him in every direction. Who can doubt but that, if any of the calamities which I have been inventing were true, Fame, that most fleet-footed herald of all disasters, would have already brought tidings of it hither? Nay, if she halted in her course, would not Fortune, long my enemy, have hastened her flight, so that my despair might grow past bearing? No, no! I believe that he is plunged in the deepest

affliction, as I am, because he is unable to come, and has to stay where he is, being kept there by main force. He will soon be with me, or, if not, he will send me a letter to console me, explaining the reason for his delay, and excusing it."

Assuredly, although many such baneful thoughts as those already mentioned now and then still fiercely assailed me, yet were they repelled without much difficulty, and the hopes which had tried to forsake me when the appointed term for his return had passed, I held to with all the force of my will. Ever keeping before my eyes the long-enduring love I had cherished for him and he for me, the mutually pledged faith, the oaths sworn to the gods, the infinite tears, I conceived it impossible that all this could be merely the deceptive mask of treachery. Yet eagerly as I grasped at these hopes, I could not always succeed in keeping them in the place left vacant by the thoughts described before, which, by slowly and silently thrusting these hopes from my heart, endeavored with all their might to resume their former seats and lead thereunto their baleful auguries of ill. Nay, almost before I could perceive it clearly, I was possessed with the feeling that my hopes had well-nigh abandoned me, and that these thoughts had vanquished them. But of the pangs which I suffered, none (now that, day succeeding day, no word was brought me of Panfilo's return) tortured me to the same degree as jealousy. She mastered me, despite all my resistance. She set aside every excuse I had made for him, as if, forsooth, I was acquainted with his actions. Often with arguments, hitherto rejected, did she ply me, saying:

"Aha, indeed! Art thou, in sooth, so silly as to believe that filial love, or any business or pleasure, however urgent, could keep Panfilo away from thee, if he really loved thee as he said he did? Knowest thou not

that Love conquers all things? Either he is strongly enamored of another, and has forgotten thee, or new pleasures have more potency over him where he now is, because of their newness, just as his passion for thee erstwhile had potency over him, because of its newness at the time. These ladies, as you have yourself already remarked, are in every way fit to love and be loved; and he likewise is by nature so inclined, and is, in all respects, worthy of being loved; therefore, just as he has won their hearts, it is beyond doubt that they have won his. Art thou not aware that other ladies have eyes in their heads as well as thou, and that they are quite as knowing in such matters as thou art? Yes, and they do well to be so. And dost thou also fancy that not more than one lady should please him? Certainly, I believe that, if he had thee in his sight, he would find it hard to love any except thee. But he cannot see thee now, and many months have slipped by since he last saw thee. Thou shouldst know that nothing on this earth is eternal; so, just as he was once taken with thee and thou didst charm him, so is it possible now that another has won him, and that he, forgetting his love for thee, loves another. New things are far more pleasing, and affect the mind more powerfully, than those with which we are familiar, and man is ever wont to yearn with greater avidity for that which he has not than for that which is in his possession. Things the most delectable grow tiresome if we are long used to them. And, tell me, is there any man on this earth who would not prefer to have a new sweetheart in his house rather than to have a former one in another country? Nor are the tears he shed at parting by any means a token that he loves thee with all the fondness that thou hast fancied. Men even, who have known each other only a few days, are sometimes so deeply grieved at parting that they weep outright. Ay, and they make vows and give prom-

ises which they have at the time the firm intention of fulfilling. But afterward, what with the vicissitudes of life and change of scene and new companionship, all these vows and promises vanish from their minds. And then—what are the tears, oaths and promises of young men to women but an earnest of future treachery? Such young men are usually far more apt in making such professions than in really loving. Their roving desires impel them to such courses. There is not a single one of them who would not rather change half a score of ladies every month than belong to a single lady for ten days. They flit from figure to figure, and glory in being able to say that they have had the love of many. Therefore what dost thou expect? Why dost thou permit thyself to be deceived into clutching vainly at vain hopes? Thou hast no power to wile him away from the city wherein he abides. Give over loving him, then; prove that, if he has deceived thee as to his sentiments, thou hast just as artfully deceived him as to thine."

These words she followed with many others which inflamed my soul with such hot and raging fury that it was only with the utmost trouble I could hold myself back from almost committing acts that are born of madness and despair. But before I could give full rein to this impetuous frenzy, a shower of tears gushed forth from my eyes and flowed in streams down my cheeks; at the same time I heaved the most heart-breaking sighs that ever rent human heart. In this condition I continued for no inconsiderable time. Thereafter, eager for consolation in any shape or form, I disregarded those things whereof my prophetic mind had warned me, and, using many extravagant arguments, I sought, almost by force, to bring back the hopes that had just flown. And, in this wise, I now and then recovered my cheerfulness, so that I spent several more days in alternate hopefulness and despondency.

## CHAPTER V

*Wherein Fiammetta relates how it came to her ears that Panfilo had taken a wife and in how great anguish and despair she lived, being now hopeless of his return*

**S**OFT were the tears that I shed at that period, and pleasant the sighs that I heaved, O compassionate ladies, if they be compared to those which my grieving and reluctant pen, slower to write than my heart to feel, is now making ready to depict before your eyes. And certainly, if the trials through which I had hitherto passed be rightly considered, they might be regarded as rather the little mishaps that befall a frolicsome young woman than serious calamities that bore very heavily upon her. But what follows will seem to you of a very different tenor. Therefore make strong your minds and hearts, and be not so alarmed by these introductory remarks as to decline reading what follows, on the ground that if what is to come is infinitely sadder than what was sad enough before, you do not care to hear of it. In good sooth, it is not my intent to work upon your feelings solely with no other end in view than that of arousing your pity; I have another purpose and a higher, namely that you, knowing thoroughly the iniquity of him through whom this has befallen me, may guard yourselves with more caution from becoming the prey of any young man whatsoever. And so, by inducing you to take warning from the misfortunes I have had to endure, I may be the means of curing you of an unhappy passion.

I say then, O ladies, that I was still the sport of many conflicting fancies, when, after more than a month had elapsed since the end of the appointed term, tidings of

my lover reached me on a certain day and in the manner I am about to relate.

I had gone, on pious thoughts intent, to visit certain holy ladies, partly to persuade them to pray to God in my behalf that He might be graciously pleased either to restore me my Panfilo, or else, by banishing him from my heart, enable me to regain my lost tranquility. Now it befell that, while I was conversing discreetly and courteously with the said ladies, who were closely connected with me both by kinship and friendship, came there a merchant who began to exhibit, as Ulysses and Diomedes exhibited to Deidamia, divers and beautiful jewels (such as were likely to please ladies of the kind). He was—as, indeed, I understood from his words, as well as from the answers he gave to these ladies when they sought to know whence he had come—a native of my Panfilo's country. Afterward, when he had shown all his wares, and when, after much bargaining, they had purchased some and rejected others, there was much lively talk and many a quip and jest between him and them. While he was waiting for payment, the youngest of them, equally renowned for her beauty, her birth, and her distinguished manners, the same who had before inquired who he was and whence he came, requested him to tell her whether he had ever known his countryman Panfilo. Oh, how pertinently this request comported with my most earnest inclination! Certainly, I was delighted with it, and my ears were keen to hear the answer. The merchant, without any delay, replied:

“And, prithee, who is there that should know him better than I?”

And the young lady, pretending that she also knew something of him, followed with this question:

“And how is he occupied at present?”

“Oh,” said the merchant, “he is occupied pleasantly enough. His father, having lost all his other sons,

summoned him home, and now keeps him in the house with himself."

Then the young lady put another question to him:

"How long is it since you have had tidings of him?"

"I have had none," he returned, "since I saw him last, and that was, if I am not mistaken, about a fortnight ago."

"And how was he then?" continued the lady. To which he answered: "Oh, very well, indeed! Perhaps I should inform you that I saw a most beautiful young lady entering the house on his arm on the very day I was leaving; there seemed to be great festivity and merrymaking going on for the occasion. From all I heard, she had just been married to him."

Although I had been listening to these words in the bitterest anguish, yet did I keep my eyes fixed on the face of the young lady who was asking these questions, marveling exceedingly what cause could be leading her to require such particular information about a person whom I had believed to be unacquainted with any other young lady in the city, save me alone. I perceived that as soon as the news of Panfilo's wedding reached her ears, her eyelids were lowered, her cheeks flushed crimson, and the words that had before come so quick died on her lips; and it was only by the greatest effort she refrained from shedding the tears that filled her eyes; all this, as I surmised, was caused by the tidings she had just learned about Panfilo. But I, although I was already crushed to the very earth by what I had heard, was soon after convulsed by a shock as violent as the first, and I could hardly restrain myself from falling foul upon her with the most rancorous abuse, because of her evident agitation, being envious and enraged that she should show forth her love for Panfilo by such open signs, and rightfully suspecting that she, as well as I, had but too legitimate cause for lamentation after what

we had heard. But yet I did restrain myself, and with a self-control, the like of which I believe has never before been witnessed, I let not the anguish of my heart appear on my face, which never altered its expression, albeit indeed, I felt a greater desire to weep than to hear anything further.

Not so the young lady. Exerting, perchance, as much strength as I had exerted, to keep her sorrow hidden in her own heart, as if she were not the person who had been previously so excited, she went on with her questioning, though the answers which it brought forth served only to confirm more and more strongly what we had already learned, and grew more and more baleful to her desires and to mine. Then, when the merchant begged permission to bid us farewell and we had dismissed him, masking our grief with a burst of laughter, we remained conversing for a much longer space than I should have wished.

At length, when the conversation began to languish and grow purposeless, we separated. Whereupon I, my soul flaming with wrath and anguish (like unto the Libyan lioness when she discovers the hunters from her ambushade), at one time flushing crimson, at another, becoming pale as death, now with a slow gait, and now more hurriedly than beseemed womanly propriety, I returned to my palace.

When I had entered my chamber and was at liberty to do as I liked, I burst into a flood of tears. And when this had relieved me somewhat from the great oppression I felt at my heart, words came to me, although not yet freely, and, in a trembling voice, I began thus:

"Now, O wretched Fiammetta, thou knowest why Panfilo does not return; now thou knowest the reason of that delay which thou hast so greatly deplored; now thou knowest that for which thou madest such an anxious search. What more dost thou seek? What furth-



er inquiries, O hapless one, dost thou desire to pursue? This should suffice thee: Panfilo is no longer thine. Cast away henceforth all thy fond yearnings to have him with thee again; abandon thy useless hopes; lay aside thy burning love, drive away from thee thine insensate thoughts; trust for the future the auguries of thy prophetic soul, and at length begin to try to gain some knowledge of the guile and treachery of men. Thou hast reached that pass which others as well as thou are wont to reach who are too confiding."

After these words, I was still further fired with rage, which found a vent in streams of scalding tears. Thereafter I spake anew, but in words even fiercer and wilder:

"Ye gods, where are ye? On what spot are your eyes resting now? What has become of your anger? Why does it not fall upon the scorner of your power? O Jove, he has perjured himself before thine altar! What are thy thunderbolts doing? Where art thou now hurling them? Who has ever deserved them more than he by his horrible impiety? Why do they not descend upon the head of this most execrable of men, so that hereafter others may be appalled at the thought of perjuring themselves before thee? And thou, O refulgent Phoëbus, where are now the arrows that of old smote Python? Surely that monster of darkness merited not such wounds so much as does this vile miscreant who falsely called upon thee to bear witness to his perfidy! Swoop down upon him and tear from his eyes the light of thy rays. Show thyself not less his enemy than thou wert erstwhile to the ill-starred CEdipus. And all ye other gods and goddesses, and thou, O Love, whose power this false lover has despised, why show ye not now your might and your seasonable anger? Why do ye not turn heaven and earth against this new husband, so that he may no longer remain in the world to make ye a mock, a successful traitor and the triumphant re-

pudiator of your authority? Much smaller crimes have heretofore moved you in your wrath to execute a vengeance less just. Therefore, why do you delay now? Though you inflicted the worst of tortures on him, you would not visit him with a punishment befitting his deserts. Ah, wretched me! would that you felt the effect of his treachery as I do, to the end that in you as in me there were the same insatiable desire to inflict on him a chastisement that would bear some proportion to his guilt! O ye gods, visit him with one, or with two, or with all those perils which I lately dreaded he might encounter! Slay him by whatever manner of death it may please ye to employ, so that I may, at one and the same hour, feel the last sorrow I am ever to feel for him, and exact the vengeance due me as well. Let not me alone pay the penalty of his sins, and let him not, after laughing at both you and me, enjoy himself with his new spouse."

Then, not less inflamed with anger, but with a burst of tears and sobs that shook me even more cruelly than before, turning, as it were, to Panfilo, I thus addressed him:

"O Panfilo, now I know the cause of thy absence; now are all thy artifices plain to me; now do I see who kept thee away from me, and what was the nature of that 'piety,' forsooth, of which thou hast so often spoken. Now art thou celebrating the sacred rites of Hymen, while I, betrayed by thy flattering words, betrayed both by thee and by myself, am wasting away in tears, and by my tears am opening a path for death to reach me. Yes, death, the executioner of thy cruelty, will speedily cut short my days, and of this thou alone art the cause. O most infamous of men, how prompt thou hast been in rendering my anguish unendurable! Now, tell me, what was thy purpose in espousing thy new bride? To deceive her as thou hast deceived me?

With what eyes didst thou regard her? With those wherewith thou didst capture me, the most wretched of all women? What sort of fidelity didst thou promise her? That which thou hadst promised me? How couldst thou do that? Dost thou not remember that thou canst not bind thyself by the same bond twice in succession? By what gods hast thou sworn? Before what deities hast thou perjured thyself? Woe is me! I know not what countervailing pleasure has so blinded thee that, being mine, and mine only, thou couldst belong to another! Wretched me! for what fault of mine have I deserved to be of such little concern to thee? Whither has our hitherto unalloyed affection for each other fled so soon? Alas! that their melancholy fortunes should have such power over the heartbroken! Thou hast now cast to the winds the vowed faith, pledged to me by thy right hand, and the gods forsworn, by whom thou didst most solemnly and ardently swear to return, and thy fair-spoken words, whereof thou hadst a bountiful supply, and the tears wherewith thou didst bathe, not only thy face but mine also—all these, I say, thou hast cast to the winds, and, scornfully looking down on me, thou livest blithely with another woman. Alas and alas! who could ever have believed that such duplicity lay hidden beneath thy words? and that the tears that gushed so plentifully from thine eyes were a masterstroke of cunning ingenuity? Not I, certainly. Just as the words I spoke and the tears I shed were loyal words and tears, so did I accept thine own as equally loyal. And if, haply, thou shouldst say that, contrariwise, both the tears and the oaths were true, and that the faith pledged came from a pure heart, granted, at least for the moment.

“But what excuse wilt give for not having kept that faith as purely as thou didst pledge it? Wilt thou say that thy new love’s gentleness and sweetness of tem-

per have been the cause of this? Such an admission would be a sign of thy weakness and a manifest proof of thy fickleness. And, over and above all this, will it be, therefore, satisfactory to me? Certainly not. O thou abominable young man! Was not the ardent love I bore thee, and still bear thee, albeit much against my will, plain to thine eyes? Surely, it was; and that is the reason why it needed much less manœuvring to deceive me than thou hast employed. But, in order that thou mightest prove how clever and subtle thou wert, thou didst decide to use all the arts of which thou wert possessed in discoursing with me. Now, hast thou ever thought of how little glory thou wert the gainer in deceiving a woman who trusted thee? My simplicity was deserving of more loyalty than thou hast shown it. But it were bootless to speak to thee of such things. Yet, as I believed not less in the gods, to whom thou hast perjured thyself, than I believed in thee, I will beseech them so to ordain that this may be the best part of thy renown in the future; that is, the fame of having deceived a young woman who loved thee more than she loved herself. Come now, Panfilo: have I committed any fault for which I deserved to be so skilfully betrayed by thee? Certainly not, None have I committed, except that of loving thee too well, but not wisely, and in always, besides loving thee overmuch, keeping the faith I had pledged to thee: but for such a sin, I, at least, did not merit such a penance. In sooth, one sin I fully admit I have committed, and that was the sin of abandoning myself so freely to a most wicked and merciless young man, O thou villain! And this befell me because of the wrath of the gods. Yet of this, as they themselves have clearly perceived, thou, not I, wert guilty I resisted thee, and God knoweth this, as long as I was able. Woe is me! Would that the day which ushered in that fatal night had been my last; so

might I have died a virtuous woman! Oh, what bitter and heartrending pangs will be my portion henceforth! Now wilt thou amuse thy youthful bride with many a tale of thy past loves, and wilt speak of wretched me as in every way blamable, abasing my beauty and my manners, albeit thou didst once extol both as more worthy of laud and renown than those of all other ladies. But now thou wilt have praises only for her beauty and her manners, saying that our intercourse was the fruit, not of true love, but of a transitory passion. But among the many falsehoods thou art sure to relate, forget not to make mention also of, at least, some of thy true deceptions, which have left me woebegone and forlorn. Tell her, too, of my most honorable estate, whereby she may perceive more clearly the extent of thy base ingratitude. Nor let it slip thy mind to record how many young men of the noblest rank and of the most exalted disposition and character sought to win my love, and their divers ways of seeking it, and their quarrels at night, and their many valiant encounters during the day, and the portals of my palace hung with garlands by them, and all for my sake. And yet could they not wile me away from loving thee and from the counterfeit love thou didst feign to have for me. Notwithstanding all this, thou hast in a moment forsaken me for a young girl whom thou hast scarcely known! Truly, if she be not as simple as I have been, she will always have a suspicion of thy kisses, and will be on her guard against those sly manœuvres of thine from which I, alas! have not known how to guard myself. Oh, I beseech the avenging gods that she may deal with thee as the spouse of Atreus dealt with her husband, or as the daughters of Danaus did with their husbands, or as Clytemnestra did with Agamemnon; or, at the very least, may she treat thee as I have treated my husband, who has not merited such injury at my hands; and may she cause thee such

harrowing anguish that I, yes, even I, may be forced to shed such tears for pity of thee, as I now shed for pity of myself. And if the gods have any true concern for ill-used mortals, this, as I hope and pray, will happen speedily."

Although I was almost maddened by my consuming wrongs, I recurred to them again and again, not only on that day, but on divers others that ensued; yet could I not help being disturbed also by the agitation I had noted on the face of the young lady already mentioned; and this gave birth to other feverish thoughts now, as it had at the time, and afterward.

"Wherefore," I would often say within my own mind, "should I grieve so deeply, O Panfilo, because thou art so far away from me, and at present enamored of another woman, seeing that even when thou wert here present, thou wert not entirely mine, but belonged to others also? O thou most hateful of men! Wilt thou not tell me into how many portions thy love was divided, or capable of being divided? I presume that, in addition to this lady and me (to whom thou hast now added a third) thou hast loved numberless other ladies besides, and that, too, at the very time when I believed thee to belong to me alone! At the moment I imagined I had thee all to myself, I was but sharing thee with many others! And who knows (if this news has reached her already) but that some one of these, more worthy of the favor of the gods than I, has prevailed on them by dint of her prayers to render my lot as woful as hers, because of the wrongs inflicted on her? But whoever she may be, if, indeed, she exist at all, she should pardon me, for, if I sinned against her, I sinned from ignorance, and, because of my ignorance, merit pardon.

"But as for thee, pray answer this: What were the artifices whereby thou madest it appear that those things were which were not? Of what nature was that

conscience of thine by whose promptings thou acted? By what sort of tenderness or love wert thou led on to do such things? I have often heard that it was not possible to love two persons at the same time; but, certainly, this rule does not apply to thee. No such idea has ever found a place in thy mind. In thy mind, indeed! Why, thou hast loved dozens, or at least pretended to love them! Come now! hast thou shared that pledged faith, those inviolable (O villain!) promises, those tears which thou didst shed so abundantly, with every lady of thy acquaintance or with this one only, who has been so unsuccessful in concealing that which thou hast concealed so well? If thou hast done so, thou mayest regard thyself as safe, being bound to no single lady, seeing that what has been given to everyone without distinction, cannot, apparently, be considered the possession of anyone in particular. Yet beware! How can it be that he who has seized on the hearts of so many can avoid having his own appropriated sometime or other? Narcissus, loved by many of the nymphs, and rejecting them all with scorn, was himself captured by his own image in the fountain. Atalanta, swifter than the wind, and a stern foe to love, vanquished all her lovers, until Hippomenes, by a masterly stratagem, outstripped her in the race and conquered her, she not unwilling. But what need of examples from the olden time? I, yea, I myself, whom none had ever before been able to lead captive, was enslaved by thee. How can it be, therefore, that among the many thou lightly wooest there shall not be some one who will enslave thee also? Nay, I believe, or rather I am sure, that thou wert already captured long before thou knewest me; and if such be the case, why shouldst thou not return to her who once had such power over thee as to effect thy capture? And if thou carest not to return to me, return to her who has not been able to hide the fact

that thou hast loved her. And though thou mayest wish that fortune should continue hostile to me (a fate which, at least in thy opinion, I have perhaps deserved), let not my sins do harm to others. Therefore, return also to all the other ladies, and keep inviolate the faith which no doubt thou didst pledge to them before thou didst pledge the same to me. Do not, for the sake of not hurting my feelings, make up thy mind to offend those whom thou hast left here in a condition of anxious expectancy. Surely, the one lady in the place where thou art should not have a greater hold on thee than the many ladies here who long for a sight of thee. She is now thine beyond cavil, and could not leave thee, though she wished it never so much. But thou canst safely leave her. Therefore, do thou come hither, to the end that thy presence may keep those, who can never be thine in the sense in which she is, thine still in affection and devotion."

After many such strange and useless questions and reproaches, useless, because neither did they move the ears of the gods, nor of the ungrateful youth to whom they were specially addressed, it betided that I sometimes changed the manner of my expostulations, saying:

"O hapless creature! dost thou really desire that Panfilo should return hither? Dost thou, in good sooth, believe that his near neighborhood would render thee less unhappy than his absence in a foreign land, by which thou art so exceedingly aggrieved now? If thou dost, thou art plotting thine own ruin. As the matter is at present, thou mayest have some faint doubt as to whether he loves thee or not. But, should he return, thou mightest then become certain that he returned, not for thy sake, but for that of another. Let the knowledge that thou art not alone in thy misery also bring thee some relief. The wretched are sometimes wont to



be a little comforted by feeling that they have companions in their wretchedness."

It would be hard indeed, O ladies, to make plain to you the uncontrollable fury, the multitude of heart-rending tears and groans and sobs which accompanied every one of these arguments and reflections. But, just as every other affliction reaches its highest degree of intensity, and then, in course of time, gradually becomes somewhat allayed, so it befell that when I had led this kind of life for very many days, and when it was evident that I could not attain to a higher pitch of anguish than that from which I then suffered, my despondency grew less excessive, and, after some time, if it did not wholly cease, it changed to a gentle melancholy that was endurable. Even this afterward lost its hold on my spirits, which were again warmed by the ardors of love and by some faint hopes withal; and they, having thrust sorrow from her seat, brought about an entire alteration in my purposes; so that now I was as eager to have my Panfilo back again as when he first left me. And the frailer my hopes that he would return, the more uncontrollable became my desire that he should return; and just as the flames, when worked upon by the winds coming from contrary directions, burst into ungovernable conflagration, so my love, awakened by opposing thoughts, became fiercer than ever, and I repented deeply of everything I had said before. Regarding all the things that I had been driven in my anger to speak as utterances that had actually, as it were, been heard by him, I was ashamed, and could find no expressions strong enough for my censure of that anger, which, when it first assails the soul, kindles therein such a fury that no truth has the slightest chance of making its presence felt. Yet the more vehement its rage, the more quickly does it become cold in course of time, and the more clearly does it show forth the evil it has

caused So, having recovered my former frame of mind, I began to hold the following discourse with myself:

"O silliest of all women! wherefore art thou so irritated? Why art thou so causelessly fired with resentment? Supposing even that what the merchant said be true (and thou hast no occasion to believe that it is) namely, that he has espoused another lady, is that so momentous or so novel an event that thou shouldst at once give over hoping? In such matters young men are helpless, and cannot escape doing the pleasure of their parents. If his father insisted on his doing this, upon what ground could he refuse his consent? What reason hast thou for believing that everyone who takes a wife and lives with her, loves her as well as he may love some other women? The excessive coyness which such young wives show in granting any favors to their husbands is the source of speedy dissatisfaction, no matter how much they have pleased them in the beginning. Then, haply, Panfilo has taken her on compulsion, and, still far fonder of thee than he is of her, is disgusted at being compelled to live with her. Nay, even though she be pleasing to him at present, yet mayest thou hope that he will soon cease to take any delight in her. And surely, should he return to thee, thou canst have no fault to find either with his fidelity or with his oaths, seeing that by such return he has proved his loyalty to both. Pray, then, to God that Love, who is infinitely more puissant than faith promised or oaths sworn, may force him to return to thee. And, furthermore, what so foolish as to hold him in suspicion, because of the agitation of that other lady? Wittest thou not how many young gentlemen love thee in vain, and how fearfully agitated they must be, should they ever learn that thou hast given thy love to Panfilo? Thus thou oughtest to believe it to be possible that he has been loved by many, to each of whom it will be most

distressing to hear of him that which has so much distressed thee, although each may grieve in a different manner and for different reasons."

In such wise, giving the lie to what I had so lately uttered, and becoming almost as hopeful as I was in the beginning, instead of the blasphemies which I had once spoken, I now addressed most suppliant prayers to the gods. Yet were not the hopes that had again taken possession of my soul altogether successful in renewing my cheerfulness; rather they brought with them a continual agitation and excitement which affected both my mind and my features, and I myself did not know what was the matter with me. It was true my first anxieties had taken flight. I had in the first rush of my anger thrown away the pebbles, which had been the significant witnesses of the days that had passed, had burned the letters received from him, and had destroyed many other tokens that I had before treasured. I no longer climbed the stairs of my palace to watch the heavens; when I did so I was certain of his return, whereof I was by no means so assured now. The wish to hear and relate stories was gone from me, and I felt no desire to continue the custom, although it had much shortened the nights, all of which, or, at least, the greater part of them, I often spent now without sleep, and either in prolonged weeping or in dismal and self-torturing reflections; and, when I happened to fall asleep, I was visited by dreams, sometimes, indeed, pleasant, but frequently most sad and dreary. The churches and the festivals grew very tiresome to me, and I seldom went near them, except when I could not help doing so. The pallor of my countenance threw an air of gloom over the whole palace, and all within it discoursed in various wise on my altered appearance.

Thus I passed the time in great depression and melancholy, expectant of I knew not what. My uncertain

thoughts drove me in contrary directions during the whole day, so that now I would burst into a fit of merriment, and anon sink into the greatest depression of spirits. One night, however, when I was alone in my chamber, after I had shed many bitter tears and uttered many vain words, I felt almost compelled, as it were by some divine power, to turn to Venus and address these orisons to her:

"O peerless Beauty of the heavens!" I said; "O most compassionate goddess! O most holy Venus! O thou whose sacred effigy adorned my chamber at the very beginning of my sorrows! comfort me, I beseech thee, in my heavy affliction, and, in the name of that most august and intimate love which thou didst bear to Adonis, alleviate my woes. See what pangs I suffer because of thee; see how often the horrible image of death has stood before my very eyes because of thee; see whether my pure faith has merited the awful ills I endure. I, a light-hearted young woman, entirely unwitting of thy darts, yet made myself the vassal of thy pleasure at once and without thought of disobedience. Thou knowest what precious favors thou didst promise to bestow upon me, and I, certainly, will not attempt to deny that in part I have enjoyed them. But, if thou wishest that these calamities, of which thou art the cause, should also be regarded as a part of those favors of thine, then, may Earth and Heaven perish, and may they be rebuilt in a new universe which shall follow new laws. But if these calamities be an evil, as I feel sure they are, then, O gracious goddess, let the good thou hast promised light upon me, so that it may not be said that thy holy lips have learned to lie, as those of men do. Send thy son with his arrows and his torches to my Panfilo; send him speedily to the place where he abides, so far away from me, and (if, haply, his love for me has been chilled by absence or has been ravished from me by some other

woman) let that love be rekindled in such wise that he, burning as I burn, can in no way be hindered from returning to me. Thus shall I be again comforted, and be saved from the certain death which my present hapless estate most undoubtedly portends. O sweetest and fairest of goddesses, incline thine ears unto my prayers! Or, if thou refusest to fire his heart again with the passion that throbs in mine, at least pluck thy darts from my heart, so that I, as well as he, may pass my days relieved from the anguish that tortures me."

Although I afterward discerned how entirely vain and inefficacious were all such appeals, yet at the time, almost believing that they were listened to favorably and that the boon I sought would be granted, I felt a little consoled, and the new hopes that sprang up within me somewhat mitigated my pangs. Then, giving utterance to new lamentations, I said:

"O Panfilo, where art thou now? Ah, wilt thou not tell me what thou art doing? Does the silent night keep thee, too, sleepless, and dost thou then weep such floods of tears as I do? Or do thine eyelids close in happy and unbroken slumber, which no thought of me ever disturbs? Ah, how can it be that Love governs two lovers under laws so different, when each is a fervent lover, as I certainly am, and as, haply, you are also? I know not. But if it be so, and if the same thoughts possess thee that possess me, what prison could be so strong to hold thee, what chains could be so secure to bind thee, that thou wouldst not break through the one and shatter the other, in order to come to my side? As for me, I am well convinced that no power on earth could keep me away from thee now, if a sense of shame, because my person is so well known in so many places, did not keep me from thee. And now, about another matter. Surely whatever affairs, whether business or something else, demanded thy care in the

country where thou art staying, must have been long since brought to an end. Thy father also must have had more than enough of thee—that father of thine who (and only the gods know how often I have prayed for his death!), as I firmly believe, is the occasion of thy absence at present, or, if he be not, at least it was because of him that thou wert first torn from my arms. But indeed, why am I so foolish as to pray for his death? Should I not know full well that, by doing so, I adopt the surest way of prolonging his life, seeing how hostile and maliciously disposed toward me the gods are in everything? Ah, let thy love, if it still be such as it was wont to be, overcome every impediment thrown in thy way, whether by gods or by men, and—come! Woe is me! dost thou never feel pity for my loneliness? Sure I am, if thou didst but recall our former happiness, there is no lady in the whole world who would ever succeed in taking thee away from me! And this belief of mine makes me surer than almost aught else that the tidings I have had of thy newly-wed wife are false. Yet, even if they were true, I have strong confidence that she never will be able to separate us, save for a time. Return, then, dearest. If the delight thou used to feel in my society be not enough to draw thee, let the desire to save from a most shameful death the woman who loves thee above all things in the world have force enough to hurry thee to my side. But alas! even if thou dost return, I fear me that thou wilt scarcely recognize me, so much has anguish altered my features. My sudden joy at beholding thy beautiful face will, I am sure, restore the charms ravished from mine by my infinite tears. Do not doubt, then, that thy Fiammetta shall again become all that she was when she first knew thee. Ah come! come! let thy heart plead for me—and come! Alas! I know not what curb will be strong enough to enable me to restrain my

joy when thou returnest. I dread it may be so uncontrollable as to be made manifest to everyone who happens to be present at our meeting. Yea, I have good reason to be alarmed lest that love, so long, so sagaciously, and so patiently hidden, may not then be revealed to all. But come; do not let my youthfulness, in which thou didst once take such delight, perish utterly. Come, and then when thou art come, thou wilt see whether, in adversity as well as in prosperity, ingenious falsehoods may not have power, now as before, to throw a veil over our loves. Ah, if thou wert here now, and it could not be helped, I would let everyone know who listed!"

When these words were said, I straightway rose from my couch, and, as if he had really heard me, ran to the window, having deceived myself into the fancy that I had heard what I had not heard. But when I had opened the window, and watched at the door, the deception became plain and evident to my eyes. Thus my vain joy turned to sudden confusion and dismay; as when the stout ship's mast, entangled in its sails, is borne by the resistless winds into the deep, whose waves cover the endangered and helpless bark.

Returning to my tears in the usual way, I wept miserably. Then, after a time, I tried to force myself to win some repose for my mind, and, wooing gentle Sleep, with closed eyes, I called to him within my mind, in this fashion.

"O restful Sleep, pleasantest of human things, true peace that calms the troubles of the years! O thou who fleest every care as 'twere thy foe! come hither, and make less the anxious cares that wring this tortured heart. O thou who dost renew the wasted body, and makest all human beings for a time forget their woes, and after toil dost give recovered strength, why comest thou not to me? Thou bestowest on others a passing but much desired relief—bestow it, then, on me,

who lack it more than all the world beside. Withhold it from the eyes of happy lovers, who care not for thy gifts, but rather hate them, and enter into mine, suffused as they are with tears. Have pity on me, forsaken, on me, overcome by these heartrending sobs! O thou victor over human ills, and the best part of human life withall! console me now with thy gracious favors, but mind to keep far away from me when Panfilo delights my ears, which so long to hear him, with grateful converse. O drowsy brother of stern-visaged Death, thou who minglest the things that are true with the things that are not, enter mine eyes and soothe my careworn heart! Thou once didst shut the hundred eyes of Argus, although they were so fain to watch unceasingly. Ah, what lets thee then from closing these eyes of mine, which crave such service at thy hands? O haven of life! O sweetest Sleep! who constrainest the generations of men, timorous of Death, to prepare for his advent by many and long respites, seize on me with all thy might, and banish the insane agitations that uselessly torment my soul!"

Albeit he put off granting the grace for which I sought with such earnest prayer, and came to me so slowly and after so long a time that he seemed to be forced to serve me, rather than to serve me of his own will, yet was he more compassionate than any other god to whom I had offered my supplications; for thereafter he crept insensibly into my wearied head, I being unconscious of his approach, and my mind, which had yearned for him, was soon enfolded by him completely. But with sleep did not come the ardently desired peace. Nay, in place of gloomy thoughts and of tears, a thousand visions, full of infinite and appalling terrors, were my constant visitants during the night.

I believe there was not a Fury in the horrid city of Dis that did not show herself to me, and often in divers



and terrible forms; and sometimes my sleep apparently was broken for a moment, whereat I was the rather content that it looked to me then as if I no longer saw them.

In short, few, indeed, have been the nights, after I had heard the baneful news of Panfilo's marriage, during which my slumbers had brought me either rest or comfort, as before this the thought of him, although absent, had often done; though the recollection that this was the case is the cause of additional sorrow to me now.

My dear husband perceived all these things, my tears and my sorrows, clearly enough, though he had no idea of their cause. And when he saw the grief that was mirrored on my features, and the gradual change of my complexion, now marked by a ghastly paleness, and my glassy eyes, once so bright and roguish, now almost dead and surrounded with purple circles, he several times marveled why this should be so. When he observed that I did not eat, and could not rest, he would often ask what was the cause of this. I usually answered: "My stomach is at fault: I have no notion of the reason why it has caused me such injury; but I am sure it is the cause of the deadly paleness that disfigures me." Alas! this was the occasion of still further trouble. For he not only believed me, but gave such entire good faith to my words that he had every kind of medicine prepared for me; all which I took, solely to satisfy him, and not for any benefit I expected to derive from them. And even if they had been salutary, what relief of the body can ever bring any relief to the passion of the soul? The only medicine that could be beneficial to my soul was far too distant from me to be of any help. When my betrayed husband perceived that all these medicines were of little, or rather, of no avail, he made every effort, being far tenderer in my

regard than I deserved, to chase away my sadness by many divers and novel methods, hoping thus to restore the joyous spirit I had lost. But all the changes and entertainments he planned for me were in vain. Sometimes he would address me in such words as these:

"Lady, as thou knowest, a little beyond pleasant Monte Falerno, midway between ancient Cumæ and Pozzuolo, stands charming Baiæ, on the seacoast. The sky looks down on no more delightful site than that which it views here. It is encircled by lovely hills, all clothed with trees and vines of divers sorts; and in the valleys that nestle among them, every beast whereof the hunting is a pleasure to the hunter is to be found. At no great distance is a very great and widely extended plain, and there, too, may one indulge in the chase of various birds of prey and birds of other kinds, withal. Close by are the islets of Pitacusa and Nisida, both abounding in coney; and near unto it also is the grave of the great Misenus, which opens a pathway to the realms of Pluto here are the oracles of the Cumæan sibyl, the Lake of Avernus, and the Theater (the place where the games of old were held); here are the fish-ponds and the mouldering ruins along the slopes of Monte Barbaro, works of infamous Nero, who labored in vain. All these things, though most ancient, are yet new to modern minds, and are the source of no little delectation to those who go to view them. In addition to all this, are numberless health-giving baths, which cure all diseases. Besides, the mildness of the climate is a marvel, and should suffice, in such weather as this, to induce us to visit a region so wholesome. Need I add that the time will be spent in the constant companionship of cavaliers and noble ladies, and will, therefore, be a daily round of merrymaking and festivity? Thou must see, then, why thou shouldst come, not only for the restoration of the health of the body, but also for

the restoration of the health of the mind, weighed down by the gloomy dejectedness which I plainly discern. For both causes do I wish thee to go, and assuredly our going will not be without profit."

After hearing these words, thinking that, haply, my dear lover might return during my absence, and I should not see him, I delayed answering for a long time. But, after seeing that my husband had set his heart on this, and considering that if Panfilo came, he would soon learn where I was, I replied that I was ready to obey his will; and so we set out for Baiæ. But oh! how contrary to my husband's expectations was the effect of this remedy on me! Albeit, haply, bodily weaknesses may find relief in these places, seldom if ever do persons go thither with a sound mind, and afterward return with the same, even when they have regained their health. Either because it is so close to the foamy billows from which arose the goddess Venus, or because of the season in which it is most visited, namely the springtime, the season best fitted to produce such effects, it is certain, and a cause of wonder it has often appeared to me, that even the most virtuous ladies, abandoning somewhat for the while the modesty be-seeming women, behave in all matters with a license that they never show elsewhere. Nor am I the only one of this opinion; it is shared by all those who are in the habit of frequenting the place. Here the greater portion of the time is passed in indolence, and whenever this indolence is intermitted, the exercise consists in amorous discourse, either among the ladies themselves, or between them and the young men. Here none but the most delicate viands are used to gratify the palate; wines, albeit most noble because of the antiquity of their birth, are yet most puissant, not only in awaking the sleeping Venus, but in reviving her in those in whom she was already dead. And as to the wondrous divers

ways in which the virtue of the various baths effects this, they know who have proved it: here the beaches, and the enchanting gardens, and every other beauteous spot, are constantly resounding with the echoes of various festivals, ever-changing sports, the most graceful dancing, musical instruments past counting, love songs sung in unison, by young men and women, *sonate* and *cantate* of every description. Let them, then, that can, hold out, in the midst of such things, against the might of Cupid, who, as I have good reason for believing, has little need to use all his force in this the main and most important quarter of his dominions. It was to this place, most compassionate ladies, that my husband insisted on conducting me, as if that were the best means of curing me of my amorous pains! When we arrived there, Love, in good sooth, employed just the same methods in my case that he had used in that of other ladies; nay rather, my soul (it having been already captured, needed not to be taken again) which had been somewhat, though only in the very smallest degree, cooled by the long delay which Panfilo made afar from me, and also by the floods of tears I had shed and the sorrows I had had to support, now burst into such uncontrollable flames that, meseemed, I never had experienced the like before. And this not only proceeded from the causes already mentioned, but especially from the recollection that I had often before been accompanied to this very spot by Panfilo himself, and the memory of this it was, without any doubt, that increased to such an extreme pitch both my love and my anguish, now that I could not see him at my side. Such was my state of agitation that I saw neither hills, nor mountains, nor valleys, which were not simply witnesses of my gladness and exultation and of his, when we were engaged in carrying the nets, letting slip the hounds in leash, setting the snares for the wild crea-

tures of the forests, and sometimes catching them. Not a strand, not a rock, not an islet did I set my eyes on that I did not say: "There I was with Panfilo; it was yonder he said so and so, and it was yonder we did so and so."

In the same way, everything else that I saw again, while, in the first place, it was the occasion of recalling his memory more vividly than ever, in the second but increased my ardent longing to behold him once more, either here or elsewhere. As such was the pleasure of my dear husband, we at once began to wile away the time in many and various diversions. Sometimes, rising before the day appeared, and mounting our ambling steeds, we rode, now with dogs, now with falcons, and now with both, into the neighboring districts, which were especially rich in particular kinds of game; at other times, we pressed on eagerly through shady groves, or across the open fields. And here the sight of so many various sorts of game, which gladdened the hearts of our companions, in me alone produced but little diminution of my sorrow. And when I saw some fine flights of the falcons, or some notable race, the words leaped to my lips: "O Panfilo! if thou wert only here to see, as thou wert erstwhile!" Wretched me! up to that point I had somewhat, though poorly, succeeded in keeping my eyes and my body attentive to what was going on; but such memories and the effort to hide my grief brought me, as it were, to a standstill. Oh, how often, as I now remember, did the bow fall from me and the arrows drop from my hand, under the strain of this emotion! And yet, in all that pertains to the chase, in setting the snares and letting slip the dogs, no nymph that ever followed Diana had used to excel more than I. And now, not once, but many times, when I went a-fowling after whatever birds were suitable for this purpose, it happened that I, having almost lost my

senses, would forget to unleash the hounds, and the bird would rise and fly out of my very hands; and the marvel of this was that I, who was once most keen in such a matter, now cared almost nothing for my failure. After every valley and hill and the spacious plains had been thoroughly searched by us, my companions and I, laden with booty, returned to our house, which we found, as often as not, had been made gay and festive by those left behind. At other times, tables were spread beneath the loftiest cliffs that rise seaward, projecting so as to afford a grateful shade; and there on the sanded beach our invited guests, all noble youths and noble ladies, feasted most sumptuously. But no sooner was the banquet ended than all stood up, and, to the sounds of divers instruments, at once began dancing, the dances being of every variety. I was almost compelled to take some part in these occasionally, but not for long; for my soul was so out of harmony with this kind of amusement, and my body was so feeble, that only for a little space could I endure it. Besides, I always found myself, as it were, dragged away from the carpet spread beneath our feet, and I was always saying within myself: "Where art thou, O Panfilo?" Then I retired, and sat down with some other ladies. There, by listening to the sweet notes that entered my soul, and by thinking of Panfilo, I tried to conceal my weariness, and to revive in my heart every faint little ghost of love, and to recall the happy days of yore, when I was accustomed to accompany the music of such instruments, in the presence of my Panfilo, with some little song, and that in a style by no means disagreeable. But no Panfilo was here now, and I would gladly have passed the time in weeping, if this had appeared to me possible or seemly. But I listened intently to the different songs and ballads, desiring to learn such of them as bore on my own misfortunes, to the end that, by singing them

afterward, I might be able to express my grief in a hidden sort of fashion in public, no one knowing what special reference to my special disaster was contained in the melody I repeated.

When the young ladies were tired out with dancing, which indeed they well might be, considering the frisking and gamboling they indulged in, and sat down beside us, it frequently befell that their attractive young partners, of their own accord, thronged around them, making for them a sort of garland; and I never could see them, here or elsewhere, without thinking of the first day when Panfilo embraced me, both of us remaining behind the company assembled on that occasion. I would often raise my eyes and fix them on these, almost expecting that I should again see Panfilo among them. And, while so fixing my eyes on them, I observed them with great keenness, watching the signs of love on their features; and, being very wise in such matters, I remarked everything, uneasily, but acutely, and soon discovered who loved and who scorned. Now and then I commended one youth, and, now and then another, and sometimes I said to myself, as I eyed the ladies, that it would have been better for me if I had done as I saw they were doing, that is, kept my own soul free, just as they kept their souls free by making dupes of their lovers. Afterward, condemning such thoughts, I would say to myself: "I am better pleased to have faithfully loved (if one can be pleased with having loved unwisely)." Then both my eyes and my thoughts would return to the expressive gestures of these young lovers, and I derived no little consolation from discerning those who loved fervently, and having gazed at them for a long time, I gave them much praise within my own heart for this, saying to myself:

"O happy ye, who have not lost sight of each other, as I and Panfilo have! Woe is me! just as you are doing

now, we were wont to do formerly. Long may your happiness endure, to the end that I alone may remain an example of misery to the world! At least, if Love, by overwhelming me with anguish because of my repining for that which I love, be the occasion of shortening my days, yet surely he will also, as in the case of Dido, cause the fame of my dolorous misadventure to become eternal!"

So saying, I turned my eyes and observed the different ways in which various persons were doing various things. Oh, how many youths have I seen formerly in similar places, just as I saw them now, who, after looking eagerly around in every direction, and not seeing the particular lady each fancied, regarded the festival in which they were taking part as of little or no account, and then left it, sad-visaged and melancholy! Thereupon, even in the midst of my sorrows, I could not help laughing, although weakly, seeing that I had fellow-sufferers in my pain, and that my own woes gave me so clear a sense of the woes of others.

Such, then, dearest ladies, were the results, as my words show, produced on me by the delicious baths, the fatiguing hunts, and the festive merrymakings of every imaginable kind on the seashore. Wherefore, when the pallor of my countenance, my continual sighs, my want of sleep and distaste for food, had convinced my deceived husband, as well as the physician, that my disease was incurable, he began almost to despair of my life, and we returned to the city we had abandoned. Then, as the state of the weather was favorable to many and divers entertainments, I had to be ready to take part in them, albeit they were but the sources of various sorts of trouble to me. It happened, not once, but many times, that I was invited to attend the nuptial celebrations of those who were near akin to me in blood, or were connected with me by ties of friendship or



neighborhood, and frequently I was forced by my husband to go to them, he believing my presence at such festivals would somewhat relieve my melancholy. Wherefore, on such occasions it became expedient to resume the ornaments I had abandoned, and to put in such order as I was able my neglected hair, once judged by every man to be woven of pure gold, now almost the color of ashes. And remembering, with a keener recollection than ever before, him whom my tresses, as well as all my other charms, were wont to please, I was agitated by this new tribulation to such a degree that, as I call to mind, I sometimes became altogether forgetful of myself; and awakened by my maids from a profound sleep, I picked up the comb that had fallen from my hand, and returned to my unremembered office. Then, desiring, as is the usance of young women, to take counsel with my mirror with regard to the jewels I should wear, all it answered was that I seemed a very sorry creature. Indeed, when I considered the beauty I had lost, methought it was not my face that was before me, but that some Fury from hell had turned her horrid eyes upon me. But, when I was fully adorned, I went, with the other ladies, to the joyous festivals—joyous, indeed, for the others, but not joyous for me, as He knows who knows all things, either then, or at any time since the departure of my Panfilo, but on the contrary, the occasion of every sort of sadness. Those who were present at the places appointed for the nuptials of various betrothed couples, held at different times and in different houses, always saw me with the same expression of countenance, that is, with features which wore the mask of sprightliness, but with a soul wholly attempered to sorrow, finding a fresh cause of misery equally in everything that pleased me and in everything that pained me. But, after I had been received with distinguished honors by the other ladies, eagerly

did my eyes wander round, not for the purpose of dwelling on the magnificent ornaments that made all these places so resplendent, but with the illusive hope of, perchance, meeting the gaze of Panfilo, as they were wont to wander when I used to see him often on similar occasions. And when I did not see him now, becoming, as it were, most hopeless of that whereof I was lately hopeful, I went and took a seat among the other ladies, entirely prostrated, and thankless for the honors proffered me. What cared I for honors, when he whom they were wont to please was not there to see them? And when the bride had come, and the wedding feast, after being celebrated with all the pomp and grandeur beseeeming such occasions, had ended, and the tables had been taken away, and the dances, at one time, led by the voice of some fine singer, at another, to the sound of divers instruments, had begun, when the entire nuptial dwelling resounded with joyous revelry, I, to the end that I might not appear proud and disdainful, but rather meek and courteous, took such part in the dancing and merrymaking as was expected of me. Afterward, when I had done my duty in this respect, I took a seat apart, and was soon buried in new thoughts. On one occasion, it recurred to my memory how inexpressibly stately and sumptuous had been that wedding feast—not altogether unlike the present one—which was given in my honor, not so very long ago, at which I, innocent and free, without a touch of sadness, nay, rather, in the highest spirits, was an exulting and triumphant bride. And, measuring those times with these and perceiving how different they were from each other, I had an almost uncontrollable desire to weep, and, if the place had permitted it, I would have cried out in my agony. Again came upon my mind, as it were, with a rush, another thought, as I perceived the young people entertaining one another, that I had

often made such feasts for my Panfilo. Afterward I lent my ears to amorous quips, songs and melodies, and, remembering the past, I sighed, and I was most anxious that the festival should come to a close, for it began to weary me past bearing. Nevertheless, I took particular note of everything, and, perceiving the throng of youths who surrounded the ladies, now resting after their pleasant but fatiguing exercise, I saw that many of them, or rather all, were looking earnestly at me, now and then, and that they were, each in his own way, whispering to one another. But yet they did not altogether succeed in hiding from me what they said. For part of it I managed to hear, and what I did not hear I could glean some idea of by subtle imaginings and inferences. One said to another:

"Ye gods! do look at that lady! Why, for beauty she had not her equal in our city, and see what she is now! See how pale and thin she has grown! What, in Heaven's name, can be the cause of it?"

Then, after gazing at me for some time, in the most respectful and humble manner, evidently feeling the utmost sympathy for my sad condition, they went away, but not without imbuing me with the notion that I had excited their deepest pity. Others would ask:

"Ah, prithee tell me, has that lady been ill?" And they would answer, each in his own way: "Yea, certainly; and she shows it by the plainest tokens. She appears so changed, worn, and discolored that it is most pitiful to see her, for she must be thinking of her lost beauty."

Others, manifestly, had a profounder knowledge of things, the which grieved and alarmed me. For, after much discourse, they said:

"The pallor of this lady gives a plain indication that she is in love. And what ailment tends so much to make a person wasted and decayed as a too ardent love?

Truly, she is enamored of some one, and if so it be, very cruel must he be who is the occasion of such great dolor to such a lady as to cause her to become so wasted and faded."

When these things befell, I say that I could not refrain from sighing bitterly, seeing that others had much more compassion for me than had he who, if reason and justice had prevailed, should have more pity for me than all the world beside; and, when I had made an end of sighing, I humbly prayed the gods, not aloud, but silently in my own heart, to grant them every blessing. I call to mind that among those who thus discoursed was a mighty concern for my honor, and that some undertook my defense saying:

"May God forbend that it should ever be believed of this lady that Love has troubled her! She has had fame for virtue passing that of any other lady in our city; nor, albeit we have often heard lovers talking of their love passages, have we ever heard of any such with regard to her; and, certainly, love is a passion that cannot be kept hidden long."

"Alas! alas!" I said to myself, when I heard these words, "how far are they from the truth! They think I be not in love, because, forsooth, I do not foolishly disclose my love, so that it may be revealed by the eyes and lips of every young man I meet, as so many other ladies do!"

Often, too, would stop in front of me some young men of most illustrious birth, beautiful in shape and pleasant of aspect, who had formerly tempted mine eyes in divers ways, tasking all their ingenuity and subtlety to win me to their affection. They, having now eyed me for a little space, and perceiving how much I was disfigured, were, haply, well content that I had not loved them, and passed on, saying:

"Quite ruined is the beauty of that lady."

Why should I hide from you, O ladies, a thing the hearing whereof is so unpleasant for all women? It certainly was unpleasant for me. I say, then, that, although my Panfilo, for whose sake my beauty was supremely dear to me, was not present, yet did I hear of its loss with the most heartrending distress.

Furthermore, do I remember that it befell me, at one of such festivals as I have described, to be one of a company of ladies engaged in amorous discourse. Eagerly did I listen to descriptions of various other loves, and easily did I discover that, among all these loves, never had there been a love so fervent, so skilfully concealed, and accompanied by so many misfortunes as mine; albeit of happier and less honorable the number was very great. And so, in this wise, at one time, seeing, at another, hearing what was passing around me, I let the fleeting hours slip by.

After the ladies had rested for a time, and, being recovered from their fatigue, had again risen to take part in the dancing, to make me join in which many useless attempts were made, both they and the young men grew so absorbed in the amusement as to be oblivious of everything else, intent on this alone, some, perhaps, from a desire to show that they were proficient in the art, others, thereunto impelled by fiery Venus. So, I remained almost alone, and, as I sat, I contemplated, with scornful mind, the gestures, manners and proclivities of many of the ladies. And, certainly, it betided that I blamed some severely, although I should have extremely desired, if, indeed, it could have been possible, to do just the things they were doing, had my Panfilo been present; and this also, as often as it has recurred or recurs to my mind, has been and is the occasion to me of fresh sorrow; for, as God well knows, he does not merit the great love which I have borne toward him and bear still. But, after I had excessively wearied myself with looking on

for a long time at these dances, which, for other reasons, were a worry to my mind, and being moved by other cares withal, I rose from the prominent seat which I occupied, and, eager to give vent to my grief, I modestly retired to the most solitary spot I could find. There I shed many willing tears, which relieved me, and seemed a sort of recompense for the foolish inanities mine eyes had just beheld.

It often happened that (as was natural, considering the season) the extreme sultriness of the weather induced me and many other ladies to endeavor to counteract the effects of the heat by embarking on some exceeding swift boats, supplied with a great number of oars. And, in this wise, we plowed the sea-green billows, and, timing our minstrelsy to the beat of the oars, we sought every remotest rock, and every cavern that, made by nature's hand, wound its tortuous way beneath the mountain cliffs, for there we were sure to find grateful shade and cooling breezes. When we had reached the points we were in search of, and taken possession of the spots most fitting for our pleasure, we rambled about here and there, selecting one place and another; so that soon every tiny little rocklet and shorelet that afforded any protection against the solar rays, was crowded. Here could be seen in several parts tables spread with the fairest linen, and so expensively and sumptuously adorned and decorated, and so beautiful altogether, that the very sight of them was amply sufficient to awaken an appetite in those who had lost it! Here and there, we could discern some of our companions, gayly engaged with their morning repast—and, indeed, it was now about the hour for partaking of it—whereunto we were merrily invited by all whom we approached or passed. Then, when we had all feasted to our hearts' desire, amid every sort of pleasantry, accompanied by peals of laughter, and when, after the tables were removed, we

had, as our custom was, joined in the mazy undulations of the dance, we leaped again into our barks, and rowed wherever our fancy led us.

But why should I fatigue myself and you with retailing all the particular delights whereof this place was the theater? I should never come to an end if I did. Let those who have understanding think for themselves how enchanting these must have been, even if they have never been there themselves, and if they care to go there, at the proper season, they are likely enough to come on similar scenes of youthfulness and joy. Such is the nature of the place that the minds of those who come hither are candid and free, and there are so many and such great occasions for this, that it betides almost everyone who asks here a question to receive a true answer. I must confess that, when in these places, I wore an air of false gayety, so as not to dampen the enjoyment of my companions, albeit my soul, for all that, was still plunged in its former gloom.

Not only does our city of Naples, abounding in every sort of most joyous festival beyond all the other Italian cities, enliven its citizens with its wedding feasts and its baths and its charming beaches, but, rich also in many and divers sports, it diverts its folk, now with one, now with another. Among those, however, in which it shows itself forth most magnificent, are its frequent tourneys. It has been the custom from the times of old, when muddy winter has departed, and spring, with its flowers and fresh verdure, has restored to earth her decayed beauty, for our young nobles, inflamed by the genial season, and quicker than usual in revealing their desire, to invite, during these high celebrations, to the galleries of the Knights the noble ladies who assemble on these occasions, adorned with their most precious jewels. I do not believe those whose good fortune it was to behold the daughters-in-law of King Priam when, with the

other Phrygian dames they met to greet their husbands' father with festal entertainment, ever contemplated a spectacle more radiant and imposing than that afforded by the wives and daughters of our city at all such pageants. I doubt not that if any stranger, of quick apprehension, should suddenly come upon the spectacle of our ladies assembled in one of our theaters, where each of them is sure to make such a display of her charms as is possible and seemly, he would, after considering their stately deportment, their superb costumes, and their more than regal ornaments, judge them not to be modern ladies, but rather some of those magnificent dames of old, returned for the nonce to the upper world. He would say to himself:

"Truly that lady resembles Semiramis. After examining her jewels, I should believe that other to be Cleopatra. The lady yonder, considering her ravishing beauty, might be Helen; and, looking at the movements and gestures of that other, I cannot see that she differs in aught from Dido."

Here, among such a numerous and noble company, very few kept sitting, or were silent, or complained. But, while the old men stood up to look on, the dear youths took the delicate hands of their ladies, and, all the time dancing, sang, in their loudest voices, of their loves; and, in this wise, and with every manner of *divertissement* that could be invented, did they spend the warm part of the day. When the rays of the sun began to lose somewhat of their ardent heat, came thither the august princes of our Ausonian kingdom, garbed with the splendor which their magnificence demands. They, after they had for a while contemplated both the beauty of the ladies and their dancing with high approval, went away, attended by all the youth, both knights and squires. Then, after no long interval, they returned in state, each with a brilliant retinue, and attired in apparel



altogether different from that which they first wore. Is there any tongue in the whole world so rich in splendid eloquence, so fruitful of polished phrase, as to be altogether capable of describing raiment so gorgeous, so elegant, and so variegated? No, not even the Grecian Homer, not even the Latin Virgil, albeit they of old depicted so many pageants and ceremonies of Greeks, Trojans and Italians in their verses. Then will I task all my ingenuity in order, slightly and in some small degree, to give some notion of this to those who have not been able to see it.

These princes rode on steeds so fleet in their course that no other animals could outstrip them in the race. And the youthfulness, and enchanting beauty, and the shining virtues of these our princes rendered the sight of them especially pleasing to the on-lookers. They were clad in purple and fine raiment, woven by Indian hands with devices of various colors intermingled with gold; and, in addition to this, their vesture was wrought with pearls and other precious stones. Their steeds, too, were caparisoned in marvelous wise, with their fair manes hanging from their shoulders, and their heads encircled with thin gold hoops or garlands of fresh flowers. Soon these noble youths, with an exceeding light shield in their left hand, and a lance in their right, hearkening to the quick sounds of the imperative trumpet, close together and with numerous followings, all in such apparel as I have described, begin to show forth their skill in sport in presence of the ladies, those winning most praise who careered around the ring, the points of their lances almost grazing the ground, and their bodies well covered by their shields, and their chargers handled with the most graceful dexterity.

These, in joyous procession, advanced at a slow pace round the lists, two or three times, so as to exhibit their

grace and dexterity to the spectators, and afterward began the tournament; erect in their stirrups, covered by their shields, with the points of their light spears almost grazing, yet not touching, the ground, they set out at full gallop, on coursers fleeter than any breeze. The air resounded with the tinklings of the numberless bells, the shouts of the multitude, the clangor of trumpets and clarions, and the whistling of the whips that fell on the shoulders of the noble horses and made them sweep along faster and faster. And not once, but many times did the loud applause of the spectators attest the interest they took in the gallant riders; and, indeed, they were all well worthy of it. How many ladies did I also perceive, fairly beside themselves with joy, for some had seen among these a husband, some a lover, some a near kinsman. And not only they, but strange ladies who were present were deeply absorbed in the sport. I alone, although I saw my husband there among the knights and many goodly kinsmen of mine with him, looked on in sadness, for I did not perceive Panfilo, and I could think of nothing but of how far he was from me!

When the festival had come to a close, and I had departed, being filled with wrath against the false shows of earth, I said:

"How blest is he who dwells in his solitary abode amid scenes of rural life, beneath the open canopy of heaven! The snares and pitfalls he prepares are only for simple birds or savage beasts. No cares ever trouble his soul, and if, perchance, exceeding fatigue disturbs his body, he flings himself incontinent on the cool grass, and there reposing, recruits his weakened strength. Now, he reclines on the bank of some rapid stream, now, beneath the shade of some bosky grove, and listens to the warbling of the woodland songsters and to the trembling leaves which, set a-quiver by the zephyrs, adjust, as it were, their whispering notes to the melodious

sounds. Such a life thou shouldst have bestowed on me, O Fortune, a life compared to which all thy vaunted boons are full of cares and most pernicious. Of what profit to me are lofty palaces and rich couches and princely blood, if my ever restless mind has to be constantly wandering to distant countries in search of Panfilo, and if it never allows these wearied limbs to rest? Oh, what a sweet and charming thing it is to stretch oneself on the grassy margin of some swift-flowing stream, and there on the soft turf, fearing no peril, to close the eyes in gentle slumbers, lulled by the river's dulcet, murmuring sounds! Such delights are freely granted to the poor rustic, and withheld from those who need them more, being spoiled by flattery or wearied by civic troubles or exhausted by the tumultuous disorder of a roystering family.

"The homely swain, when hunger haply goads him, satisfies it with apples gathered in his faithful woods; and the fresh herbs that spring spontaneous from the soil, and grow on little mounds, minister to his wants with savory food. Oh, how sweet it is for him to quench his thirst from fount or neighboring stream, and drink the liquid from his hollowed hands! Oh, most unhappy ye, and vexed with anxious cares, who make the world your idol! Ye know not how simple are the things that nature provides for your wholesome sustenance! We believe the wants of the body can be satisfied only by a multitude of various dishes, and do not perceive that, because of them, the humors of the body are often vitiated than corrected. We behold also goblets, wrought of gold and set with jewels, made ready for artificial beverages, which are often deadly poisons, and, if they be not poisons, at least those who drink them drink Venus surely. Sometimes, too, quarrels arise therefrom, violence results, and, by words and deeds, a wretched life or a shameful death is purchased. But the

rustic is content with the innocent society of the Fauns and Satyrs, the Dryads, Naiads and Nymphs. He knows not who Venus is, and naught of her double-faced son. If haply he has become acquainted with her, the form under which she shows herself to him is rough and uncouth, not comely at all. Would it had been God's pleasure that my acquaintance with her had been of a similar kind, and that the company that visited me had been also rough and homely! Then should I have been kept far from the incurable agony which I have to endure! Then would my soul, the guardian of my sacred reputation, care little, indeed, to behold those worldly shows, as unsubstantial as the fleeting wind, and, if I did behold them, no such pangs would follow the sight as those which now afflict me. What reck's the rustic of lofty towers, of battlemented castles, of patrician houses, of delicate couches, of splendid attire, of swift-footed coursers, or of the numberless other things that rob us of the best part of our lives and are the source of our most anxious concern? He need not dread the attacks of wicked men, and can abide in parts remote and solitary without fear. He never dreams of seeking in palatial mansions a doubtful repose; all he craves is air and light, and heaven itself is the witness of his life. Oh, how badly known is such a life to-day, kept far away from each of us, as if it were an enemy! And yet it should be sought by all, being the most precious thing on earth! Certainly, I am quite positive that this was the manner of life in the Golden Age, which gave birth to men and gods at the same time. *Oumè!* sure I am that never was a mode of life freer from guilt and marked by more innocence and contentment than that which the first men adopted, and which is still adopted to-day by him who flees from cities and dwells in sylvan scenes.

"Would that God had placed me in such a world

whereof the folk were content with little and frightened of nought. If the sole thing left me out of all my possessions was the non-possession of this torturing love, and the absence of these heartrending sighs, should I not have been far happier in such an age as I have depicted than I am in the present, though it be full of all sorts of delights, jewels, ornaments and festivals? *Oimè!* that the impious, accursed thirst for gain, headlong anger, and minds inflamed with wicked desires, should have shattered the first holy compacts—compacts so easy to keep—between nature and her children! Came the hankering for lordship over others, sin most provocative of bloodshed, and so the weak became the prey of the strong. Came Sardanapalus, the first to render Venus soft and effeminate, and to endow Ceres and Bacchus with qualities unknown to them hitherto. Came pitiless Mars, with new arts of destruction and a thousand different forms of death; and so the entire earth was stained with blood, and the sea made red with gore.

“Then did foulest crimes enter every household, and there was no sort of wickedness of which an example could not be found: brother was slain by brother, father by son, son by father. The husband lay stretched in death, smitten by his merciless spouse, and often did unnatural mothers make away with the offspring of their wombs. Of the cruelty of stepmothers to their stepchildren I do not speak—that is made manifest every day. Then riches, pride, envy, avarice, luxury, and every other vice that can be named, except one, burst in upon the world like a flood; and after them rushed in the lord and leader of the aforesaid vices, dissolute Love, for whose sake numberless cities have fallen and been reduced to ashes; for whose sake numberless sanguinary battles have been waged; for whose sake nations are even now crushed by nations. Speak not of all its other evil effects, monstrous though they be; speak rather of

those it has caused in me, for no more wonderful example of its insatiable cruelty can be found anywhere than that which it wreaks on me, compelling me to keep my mind fixed on it alone, and refusing to allow me to divert my thoughts to anything else."

After meditating a long time in this wise, I had sometimes an idea that haply the things done by me were very grievous in the eyes of God; and while I so considered, the chastisements inflicted on me, though distressing beyond comparison, had the effect of somewhat alleviating my anguish, especially as the trespasses wrought by others, being so much greater than mine, made me seem almost innocent, while the punishment endured by the same was nothing contrasted with that which I had to endure. Moreover, seeing that I was not the first nor the only one to bear such things, I hoped to have more strength to sustain the burden of my miseries, whereunto I prayed God to make an end, either by sending me death, or sending me back Panfilo.

The life, then, of which I now tell you, was the life that I led, and how little consolation I have found in it ye have heard.

I was sometimes stung to the heart by the questions of these women who encompassed me in church, questions I had to satisfy, or rather pretend to satisfy. One of them, especially, goaded me with some such words as these:

"O Fiammetta! thou hast no idea of the amazement thou dost excite in me, and in the others here present! We shall never get over it, for we are entirely ignorant of the cause that has so suddenly led thee to abandon thy splendid attire, thy precious jewels, and all the other things that so beseem thy rank and youth. Thou art not so childish as not to know that thou shouldst not be dressed in this wise on such occasions. Such very modest raiment is by no means appropriate to our fes-

tivals. As thou seest, albeit we be, each of us, much older than thou, yet do we wear our finest attire and our most valuable ornaments, as, of a truth, thou shouldst also."

To her and to the others who were eagerly awaiting my answer, I replied, meekly and humbly, as follows:

"Ladies, we go to church either for the purpose of pleasing God or of pleasing men. If we go to please God, all that is required of us is that our souls be adorned with virtue, and it little matters whether our bodies be clad in silk or sackcloth. If we come here to please men, as the greater part of them are blinded by false opinions, and judge of internal sentiment by outward show, I confess that the ornaments worn by you, and by me formerly, may be deemed necessary. But I no longer care for such matters. Nay, rather, grieving over my past vanities, and desirous to amend and sanctify my life in the eyes of God, while asking His pardon for past sins, I wish to render myself as despicable as I can in your eyes."

And, when I had spoken, I could no longer restrain my tears, which gushed forth from my eyes and bathed my whole face; and I spoke, but voicelessly, within myself:

"O God, searcher of hearts, let not the untrue words I have just uttered be imputed to me as a sin, seeing that they were not uttered with intent to deceive, but rather because necessity constrained me to hide my anguish from those women; nay, impute it to me even as a merit, inasmuch as, instead of giving a wicked example to Thy creatures, I have given a good one. It is a most grievous punishment to me to have to tell a lie, and it is most distasteful to my soul to have to support it. But I cannot help this."

Then the women chided me again, reproving me for my excessive tears, and saying:

"O Fiammetta, what kind of behavior is this? Dost thou despair of God's mercy? Dost thou not believe that He is compassionate enough to forgive thee all thy little trespasses without so much weeping on thy part? By this that thou art doing thou wouldst seem to be seeking death rather than pardon. Rise! dry thy tears, and heed piously the sacrifice offered to Jove supreme by our priests."

At these words I raised my head, after thrusting back my tears; but I did not turn and gaze around, as I was wont to do. Why should I care to do so now, when I knew that I should not see my Panfilo? And I no longer cared whether others were looking at me, or who were looking at me, or to read in their eyes the opinions the spectators had of me. On the contrary, altogether mindful of Him who gave His life for our salvation, I prayed most piteously for my Panfilo and for his return, using these words:

"O Almighty Ruler of the highest heavens and universal Umpire over the whole world, bring to an end my grievous woes, give me some relief from my heavy afflictions. Behold, no day is for me secure. The ending of one calamity is but the beginning of another. I, who lately declared myself happy, not knowing the misery in store for me, first confess that I have offended Thee, though unwittingly, in my youth, by excessive and vain adornment, albeit nature had already adorned me more than was my due. For this offense Thou hast, by way of a penance, subjected me to this ungovernable love which tortures me; Thou hast also filled my mind, not used to such cares, with fresh anxieties, and to crown all, Thou hast separated me from him whom I love more than myself, wherefore infinite perils have flown in upon my life. If the wretched are sometimes heard by Thee, lend Thy merciful ears to my prayers, and, without glancing at the manifold faults I have committed against



Thee, graciously regard only my few good deeds, if any I have ever done, and, as a reward for these, deign to grant my humble requests: a very slight thing for Thee to do, but to me an occasion of exceeding content, if Thou doest it. I do not ask Thee to restore to me my Panfilo. *Oimè!* well I can discern that such prayer, in the eyes of Thee, O most righteous Judge, would be unrighteous. But even Thy justice must move thee to prefer a lesser evil to a greater. It is manifest to Thee, from whom nothing is hidden, that it is altogether impossible for me to drive this exquisite love from my mind. Nothing can do so—not even those past calamities, especially those at the time of his departure, and afterward. These have been so numerous and so overwhelming that I have a thousand times called upon death to release me from them. But I have had always some slender hope that Thou mightest relent and take pity on me. Therefore, if the return of my tender lover is the lesser evil, return him, I beseech Thee, and give him back to me. Let living sinners, who may yet repent and know Thee, be dearer to Thee than dead sinners, who are without hope of redemption. Above all, decide to lose only a part, rather than the whole, of the creatures by Thee created. And, if this be too great a boon to be granted to me, at least grant me that boon which is the ultimate end of every misery; for if thou dost not, I, unable any longer to bear the crushing burden of my anguish, am resolved to seize upon it with mine own hands. May these my words reach Thy presence; but, if they cannot move Thee, or any other of the gods who hold supreme power over the celestial regions, yet shall I appeal to such of the deities as once dwelt on earth and experienced the same amorous fires which I experience now. Do ye receive my orisons, and present them to him who would not take them from me. So, when ye have obtained for me this grace, may I be

able to live joyously; at first, for a time here below, and afterward yonder above with Thee, when has closed for me this earthly life. Then, too, will it be a pleasure for me to show sinners that I, too, can pardon and help them."

When these words were said, I laid odorous incense and goodly offerings on the altars, to the end that I might obtain the graces for which I asked in my prayers, and also that God might give health and happiness to my Panfilo. When the sacred ceremonies were concluded, I left with the other ladies, and returned to my gloomy palace.

## CHAPTER VI

*Wherein Madonna Fiammetta, having heard that Panfilo has not married, but is in love with another lady, and will not return, shows how, all her hopes being crushed, she resolves to kill herself.*

**A**S you must have clearly understood, most compassionate ladies, from the things mentioned before, my life has been, and still is, most luckless in the field of love. Yet, if the past be compared with what was to follow, those who will consider it with due seriousness must regard my life before the period I am about to describe as relatively happy. I shrink with terror from describing the pass to which love ultimately conducted me, and I was inclined to put off depicting it, both because I was ashamed of my madness, and because, even though I be inclined to dwell on things less grievous and avoid the thought of it, yet does the madness ever seem to return when I write. Still, now that I can no longer avoid the subject, I will try to arrange my thoughts in some sort of order and enter into such details as are necessary for a complete understanding of my case

But do thou, O most holy Pity, soft tenant of the hearts of ladies, keep a tighter rein on their compassion than thou hast done until now, lest, indulging in it overmuch, they may be so blinded by their tears as not to be able to read that which I purpose setting down

The sun had again returned to that part of the heavens once so badly scorched when his presumptuous son dared to guide the father's steeds; and I knew that just a year had elapsed since the time of my parting from Panfilo. Miserable as I felt, I had from long usance become somewhat accustomed to the endurance of my

woes, and my grief was less immoderate than it was wont to be. So overwhelming were the calamities I had suffered that I had concluded it to be impossible for any more to be added to these, when Fortune, not satisfied with the ills wherewith she had visited me, decided to prove that she had still more bitter poisons in store for me.

It betided that a most faithful servitor of our house had just returned from the country where Panfilo was now dwelling;\* he was by all our household, and especially by me, most graciously received. After he had related all his adventures, some of them prosperous and others the reverse, it chanced that he remembered something that had occurred in connection with Panfilo. Him he praised exceedingly, and spoke gratefully of the high honors which my lover had paid him. I was so delighted at listening to these praises that only the strong control exerted by my reason prevented me from running up and embracing the speaker, and putting further questions to him, and even revealing the affection I felt for my Panfilo. I learned a great deal about Panfilo's present situation, his health and well-being, from the answers our servitor gave to the numerous inquiries made by the others. Then, with feigned carelessness and gayety, I asked what he was doing at present, and whether he had any intention of returning. To these my questions he thus replied:

"Madonna, why should Panfilo care to return now, considering how matters stand with him? The fairest damsel in all his country, a land, too, peculiarly abounding in beautiful women, is in love with him, nay, as I have heard, loves him to distraction. I have reason to believe that he also loves her passionately. Indeed, if he did not, I should regard him as little better than a

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\*Florence.

madman, whereas I have hitherto always esteemed him to be exceeding wise."

When these words smote upon my heart, it experienced the same change that must have come upon CEnone's, when, from the lofty summit of Mount Ida, whither she had betaken herself to watch for her lover's return, she beheld Paris coming with his Grecian mistress in the Trojan ship. I could hardly prevent the anguish of my soul from appearing on my face, albeit I yet managed to do so, and, with a false laugh, I said:

"Certainly, what you say is very true. This country should not be at all pleasing to him, seeing that it was not able to provide him with a sweetheart commensurate with his merit. If he have found such a one there, he acts wisely in staying with her. But tell me, how does his newly wedded wife endure this? Does it not anger her?"

To which he answered:

"He has no wife. It is true that, not very long ago, a lady took up her dwelling in his house; but it was not as his wife, but as the wife of his father"

No sooner were these words uttered than it seemed to me as if the torture I had hitherto endured had left me, and another, infinitely more unendurable, had taken its place. I was straightway pierced with anguish and anger, and my affrighted spirit quivered in every part of my body. I felt that all my strength was forsaking me, and, summoning whatever calmness and resolution I possessed, I retired from the company with such decorum as might prevent them from seeing anything strange in my demeanor, and sought refuge in my chamber.

As soon as I was alone and safe from the presence of every human being, mine eyes, like unto two full-laden springs that overflow in some humid valley, shed such streams of bitter tears that it seemed as if they should never cease. I cried aloud: "Panfilo! why hast thou

betrayed me?" Then I threw myself upon my couch, or rather fell thereon, helpless and supine. Words failed me, being lost as it were in the course of their journey to my lips, and suddenly all strength was wrested from my tongue, as well as from my other members. Then I lay like one dead, and dead I was believed to be by those who first saw me, and who watched by my bedside for a very long period, without discovering any sign which would indicate that my wandering soul had returned to its seat. But, after a time, it recalled its scattered and vanishing forces, and again took up its abode in my suffering body, and the lost light of life came back to my eyes. Then, raising my head, I saw bending over me several ladies who had bathed me all over with precious liquids, and, after rendering me this compassionate service, they were still weeping; and I perceived near me also several other appliances, intended to minister to my recovery. And, seeing these things and the tears of the ladies, I did not a little marvel.

When the power of speech was at length restored to me, I inquired what was the occasion of these things being there. Whereupon one of them made this answer to my question: "These things were brought here for the purpose of recalling thy soul which, we thought for a time, had forsaken thee altogether."

After heaving a bitter sigh, I said:

"Alas! ye imagine yourselves pitiful, and yet what a most cruel service is this ye have rendered me! Believing that you were conferring a benefit upon me, you have harmed me exceedingly, and that, too, contrary to my wishes; and the soul which was ready to forsake the most wretched body that mortal ever possessed, you have by main force kept in its tenement. *Oimè!* was ever anything desired with such eager longing as that which you have denied me! Just as I was about to be freed from all my tribulations, you stepped in and deprived me

of the boon I craved above everything else in the world!"

The ladies endeavored to comfort and console me in divers ways, after I had spoken these words. Vain, indeed, were their attempts. Yet did I feign to be somewhat soothed by their sympathy, to the end that, having got rid of them, I might indulge my sorrow by myself without their interference.

When one of them had taken her leave, and I had dismissed the others, assuming for the occasion an almost gay expression of countenance, I remained alone with my old nurse and with the maid who was privy to all my misfortunes. They at once began to apply such cooling remedies for my sickness as must have cured me of it, if it had not been mortal. But I, having my mind wholly fixed upon the words I had heard, and straightway having become the enemy of one of you, O ladies, I know not of which, proceeded at once to nurture thoughts of the most baneful description; and the grief which I could not entirely keep within myself, I forced out of my gloomy breast with furious words, speaking in some such wise as follows:

"O most false-hearted of men! O foe to all tenderness and good faith! O Panfilo!—baser than the basest!—who, having forgotten me, dost now abide with a new love! Accursed be the day that I first saw thee! Accursed be the hour, the instant, when thou didst first please me! Accursed be that goddess who, by appearing to me in visible form at the very moment when I was firmly resolved to resist the temptation of loving thee, caused me by her deceiving words to alter my righteous purpose! But, of a truth, I do not believe that she was Venus. Nay rather, she must have been one of the Furies of hell, who assumed the form of the goddess to drive me wild with madness, just as she did erstwhile to the wretched Athamas O most cruel youth, perniciously chosen by me as being the best among so

many others who were noble, valiant, and handsome! Where are now those prayers wherewith thou hast so often tearfully entreated me, declaring frequently that only by my kindness could thy life be saved, and that when thou wert dead, as thou soon must be, thy death would lie at my hands? Where are now, O wretch, those lugubrious and weeping eyes? Where is now that love for me which thou didst so violently exhibit? Where are now the perilous and bitter hardships thou wert ready to undergo in my service? Where are thy sweet words? Are they all blotted out now from thy memory? Or hast thou been using them again to entrap in thy snares the lady thou hast just captured? Ah, accursed be that pity of mine which rescued that life of thine from death!—that life which, though it render the life of another woman blithe and merry, will surely conduct mine to a gloomy death. Now are the eyes, which in my presence shed so many tears, smiling and laughing for the delectation of the new love; the sweet words, and the fickle heart are now all for her. Where now, Panfilo, are the gods thou hast forsworn? Where the promised faith? Where the infinite tears, which I sometimes drank, believing they were shed in compassion for me, and unwitting that they were but the outward and most positive signs of thy treachery? All these things which thou didst steal from me when thou didst steal away from me thyself, thou hast now entrusted to the new charmer.

*“Ommè!* what affliction I endured when I heard that thou hadst been united with another lady by the chaste and holy rites of Juno! But, as I felt that the vows pledged to me must take precedence of all others, and even of these, I bore this, albeit for a time overcome by my righteous anger and grief; or, at least, the anguish I had endured at first gradually diminished. Now, indeed, that I know thee to have bound thyself to another by the



very same ties whereby thou wert bound to me—how can I ever support such intolerable and heartrending pain? Now I know the true cause of thy absence and now, too, do I know my own artless simplicity, which induced me to believe that thou wouldst return to me, if it were in thy power to do so.

“Now, Panfilo, were such cunning wiles really needed to deceive me? Why didst thou swear the most solemn oaths and pledge thy most inviolate faith (inviolable, indeed!) if it was all the time thine intention to deceive me in this manner? Why didst thou not depart without bidding me farewell and without any promise to return? Hadst thou done so, I should doubtless have forever despaired of thy love, but I should at once have been aware of thy treachery, and either death or oblivion would have put an end to my torments, which thou, by holding vain hopes before mine eyes, hast wished to keep alive, and hast succeeded in keeping alive, to the end that my sufferings for thy sake might be prolonged as much as possible. But I have not deserved thus at thy hands. *Oimè!* how sweet were those tears of thine to me once! Now that I know what they meant, they have, indeed, become most bitter. If Love has been such a tyrant to thee as he has been to me, was it not enough that thou shouldst have been captured by him once, without allowing thyself to be trapped by him a second time? But what is this I am saying? Thou hast never loved! Nay rather, it has always been a delight to thee to show thy scorn for women. If thou hadst been capable of loving, thou wouldst have been still mine. And to whom couldst thou ever have belonged that would love thee more than I? Whoever thou mayst be, O lady, who hast taken him from me, though thou art mine enemy, I feel that mine own very anguish compels me to feel compassion for thee. Be on thy guard against his guile and duplicity, since—and that thou surely knowest—he

who has once deceived, has lost the sense of honest shame, and will continue to deceive ever afterward without having a consciousness of his guilt.

"How many prayers, how many offerings, O most base-hearted youth, have I brought to the altars of the gods for thy health and safety, for thee, in fine, who, all the time, wert planning to abandon me and give thyself to another! O ye gods! ye have, indeed, returned a favorable answer to my prayers, but for the profit of another woman! I have had the torture and the anguish; another is to have the happiness! Tell me, thou recreant, was not my form beautiful enough to content thee, and was not my noble birth at least equal to thine? Certainly it was, and much more than that, did I ever refuse thee a share of my wealth, or ask for a portion of thine? Certainly not. Has any other man except thee been loved by me, either in word, deed or appearance? None! And this thou wilt acknowledge, unless this new love of thine has entirely deprived thee of truthfulness. Has any fault of mine, then, has any just cause, or any greater loveliness, or more ardent love, bereft me of thee and bestowed thee on another? Certainly not. And let the gods be my witnesses that the only fault I ever have committed in thy regard has been in loving thee overmuch. Thou knowest whether this deserves the treachery which thou hast plotted against me O ye gods! righteous avengers of the crimes of mortals! I call upon ye to inflict on him a punishment which shall not be unjust. I neither desire nor seek his death, which he has already escaped through my intervention, albeit he wishes mine; nor other harm do I wish him than this: if he loves his new sweetheart as I love him, may she betray him and give herself to another, as he has betrayed me; and may her desertion have the effect of forcing him to lead such a life as he has now forced me to lead."

I then flung myself back on my bed, writhing and tossing about in unutterable agitation and ungovernable frenzy.

The whole of that day was passed in a state of excitement and paroxysm, varied by the utterance of such wild words as those above. When night had come—night more unpropitious than day to every sorrow, for darkness is more in harmony with misery than light—and I lay beside my dear husband, I remained awake, indulging silently in my dolorous thoughts, turning over in my mind the days that were no more, both those that had been pleasant and those that had been painful. Above all, the thought that Panfilo was lost to me, because of this new love of his, increased my anguish to such a height that I could no longer curb it, and it found a vent in most lamentable moans and exclamations, albeit I succeeded in concealing the occasion of my woe. My weeping grew so loud that at length my husband, who had been wrapped in the profoundest slumber, awoke, and turning to me all bathed in tears, and taking me in his arms, he thus addressed me, in most compassionate and loving tones:

“Oh, sweetest soul of my soul, what cause leads thee to weep so inconsolably in the quiet night? I beseech thee to tell me why thou hast been so dejected and woe-begone for such a length of time. Nothing that disquiets thee should be hidden from me. Is it that thy heart craves for something which I can procure for thee, and which I yet have not given thee, although thou hast asked for it? Knowest thou not that thou art my sole comfort and consolation, the only good that I prize? Knowest thou not that I love thee above all things else in the world? Of this thou art assured, not by one single proof, but by many. Why, then, dost thou weep? Why art thou afflicted with such extreme anguish? Do I not seem to thee to be in every way worthy of thy

noble race? Or have I committed any offense against thee for which I am bound to make amends? Tell me! speak! reveal thy desire! thy every wish shall be fulfilled, if only the fulfilment be within my power. The change which I have witnessed in thy appearance, thy dress, and thy entire deportment, has for many months rendered my life utterly wretched; but never yet hast thou seemed to me so wasted, so broken-hearted and so wholly altered as thou hast to-day. I was wont to think that bodily weakness was the reason of thy pallor; but now I am well aware that it is mental anguish that has brought thee to the condition in which I now behold thee. Why, then, shouldst thou not disclose to thy husband the source of the ills that trouble thee?"

Whereunto I, taking counsel with my sex's duplicity, resolved to answer by a lie, although lying was once an art entirely foreign to me:

"Husband, dearer to me than all the world beside, I lack nothing which thou couldst bestow on me, and I know that thou art in every way worthy of me, and that beyond any doubt. That which has reduced me to this state of sadness, both before and now, is the death of my beloved brother, of which thou art well aware. This it is that forces the tears from mine eyes every time his melancholy fate recurs to my memory. And certainly I do not weep so much because of his death, for I well know that to death we must all come at last, as because of the manner of it, which, as thou wittest, was most unfortunate and shameful. The things, too, which happened afterward were calculated to increase my sorrow. I cannot for a moment close my sad eyes in sleep that he does not appear unto me with features of ghastly pallor and with raiment all covered with blood, while, at the same time, he points to his hideous wounds. Just now, when thou didst hear me weeping, he showed himself to me in my sleep, with a countenance so utterly

weary and frightful, and looking so paralyzed with terror, that it was no wonder he could hardly utter the words he wished to speak. After a time, but only with the greatest effort, he said: 'O dearest sister, try to rid me of this shame, which causes me to wander dolefully among the other spirits with disturbed mind and downcast eyes.' Then, albeit I derived some consolation from seeing him, wretched though he was, I was so overcome with grief on account of his apparel and of his melancholy words that I was straightway aroused, and sleep fled from me. Afterward followed those tears—a tribute due from sisterly affection—which obtained thy loving and most soothing commiseration and sympathy. And well the gods understand that were arms suited to my woman's hands, I would have avenged him long before to-day, and enabled him to move among the other spirits with lofty brow. Now thou knowest, beloved husband, that not without reason am I depressed and unhappy."

Oh, what compassionate words did he thereupon employ to mitigate a feigned sorrow, which, indeed, had once existed, but had been long allayed! What ingenious arguments did he use to engage me to moderate my anguish! True and sincere arguments they were, forming a great contrast to my lies! When he believed he had somewhat consoled me, he again fell into a deep sleep; and I, affected by his exceeding pity for me, and weeping from still more intense desperation, resumed again the dismal discourse which I had before begun to utter within my heart, saying:

"O ye most cruel caverns that are the lairs of savage beasts! O Hell, thou noxious prison decreed before all time to be the eternal abode of the wicked! If there be any other place of torment hidden within the bowels of the earth, do thou seize me, the guilty one, and draw me down to the tortures I have deserved! O Jove su-

preme! whose wrath I have justly provoked, hurl thy thunderbolts against me with thine own unerring hand! O sacred Juno, whose most holy laws, I, vilest of women, have most foully violated, avenge thyself on my head! O ye Caucasian rocs, tear to pieces this wretched body! O ye swift-winged birds of prey, and ye most ferocious beasts, devour me! O ye fleet-footed steeds that mangled the body of the innocent Hippolytus, come and tear me, sinfulest of women, into four quarters; and do thou, too-merciful spouse, plunge thy sword into this guilty bosom, and chase from it the sinful soul that has so long deceived thee. Let no pity, no mercy, be shown to me, who have preferred the faith of a stranger to the sanctity of the marriage tie. O thou wretch, depraved beyond all other women, and deserving of greater punishment than the most infamous of thy sex, what fury blinded thy chaste eyes on the day when Panfilo pleased thee? Where didst thou abandon the piety due to the holy laws of wedlock? Where didst thou fling aside chastity, that supreme crown of womanly honor, when thou didst forsake thy husband for Panfilo? Where is now the almost reverential affection which thou didst expect from the beloved youth? Where is the consolation in thy misery to which thou hadst such a claim? He lets the time slip by gayly in the society of another, and cares not for thee. And this is what should deservedly and reasonably happen to every woman who prefers to a lawful love an unlawful passion. Thy husband who, more than anybody else in the world, ought to harbor malice in thy regard, does his very best to comfort thee, and he who ought to comfort thee heaps scorn upon thy head. Is not this husband of mine quite as handsome as Panfilo? Certainly he is. In virtue and nobility, and in every other distinguished quality, is he not far superior to Panfilo? Is there anyone on earth that doubts this? Then, why didst thou forsake him for another?

What blindness, what heedlessness, what sin induced thee to commit such a folly? That is a thing of which I am wholly ignorant. The only reason I can discover is that we are wont to esteem whatever we can obtain easily and freely as of no account, although in reality it is most precious; while whatever we have the greatest trouble in getting, we reckon most precious, although in reality it is most vile. The excessive fondness of my husband for me, to which I sometimes refused to respond, did not give me the pleasure it should have given, and for this do I now bitterly lament.

"I should have gathered strength to resist Panfilo from the vision the gods showed me during the night and morning which preceded my ruin. Now that I cannot depart from loving, although I wish to do so, I know of what nature was the serpent that pierced me under the left breast, and then departed full of my blood; and, similarly, I see what the garland which fell from my unfortunate head was intended to signify; but too late has this warning reached me. The gods, whose wrath I must evidently have incurred, repented them of the warnings they had given me in visions, and therefore deprived me of the power of interpreting the signs they had shown me. In this wise, did Apollo, after he had conferred on his beloved Cassandra the gift of prophecy, deprive it of all value by attaching to it the condition that her predictions should never be believed. Wherefore it is not without reasonable cause that I have been foredoomed to misery, and destined to consume my life therein."

In such complaints, then, did I pass the night, tossing about on my bed in restless agitation, unable to sleep; for even when sleep did enter my weary brain, its efforts to remain there were so feeble that every slightest change in my position expelled it.

When morning had dawned, my faithful nurse, from

whom no part of my misfortunes was hidden, inasmuch as she had been the first to gather from the expression of my countenance the fact that love had stricken me, and from it had predicted my future misery, entered my chamber as soon as she was aware that my husband had left it. She had been present when the news of Panfilo's love for another lady was imparted to me, and, being in great alarm about me, she was eager to render me whatever service was in her power. Seeing me lying almost dead from the anguish of the past night, she began with divers words to try to alleviate the sorrows that were maddening me, and, raising me with her arms, she began wiping away the tears from my wretched face with her trembling hand, and from time to time she spake such words as these:

"Sweet lady, thy woes afflict me beyond measure, and would afflict me more grievously still, if I had not erstwhile forewarned thee of what was sure to happen. But, thou, being self-willed rather than wise, didst spurn my counsels and pursue thine own pleasures, wherefore with sorrow do I perceive that thou hast come to the end to which such deeds as thine always bring the doer. But since we can all, provided we are willing, and as long as we are in this life, abandon the path of evil and return to the path of virtue, it is my fondest hope that thou wilt clear thine eyes of the darkness wherewith this foul tyrant has covered them, and let the bright light of truth shine upon them. How base he is, the brief delights and the long tortures, for which thou hast been, and art, indebted to him, must surely show thee. Thou hast loved, moved thereunto by thy will rather than by thy reason, as was natural in so young a woman; and, having loved, thou hast enjoyed that happiness which all who love desire from love. How brief is that delight thou well knowest; and more of that delight than thou hast had, thou canst not have nor desire to have.



"Even if thy Panfilo returned to thine arms, thou wouldst have the wonted delight no more. Love is inflamed by novelty, and, because a thing is new, it is believed to contain some hidden good, which, haply, it does not, and they who hoped for this and are disappointed soon become disgusted; but the things which are not hidden and are familiarly known are usually desired with more sobriety and moderation. But thou hast acted in quite a different fashion, being hurried away by thy ungoverned fancy and altogether bent on thine own destruction. Discreet persons who happen to find themselves in places full of peril and difficulty, as soon as they perceive the dangers by which they are surrounded, at once turn back, not foolishly thinking that, as they have lost so much time in coming so far, they ought to go farther, but rather feeling that, by going farther, they surely incur the risk of death. Do thou, therefore, imitate the example I have set before thee; show more self-restraint than thou art wont to exhibit, and place thy reason above thy will. Free thyself from the danger and the anguish into which thou hast allowed thyself to be hurled, and prove that thou hast some wisdom. Fortune has been very gracious to thee, if thou but well consider the matter: she has not closed the path of retreat behind thee, so that thou canst easily return along the road which thou hast trodden until now, and be again the same Fiammetta thou wert wont to be. Thy reputation is untouched, and, inasmuch as anything thou mayest have done is unknown to the people, it has suffered no tainture in their minds. And this is fortunate, for the loss of reputation causes many young women to fall into the lowest depths of infamy. Do not thou advance any farther on this path, lest thou lose that which Fortune has reserved for thee. Try to comfort thyself with the thought that thou hast never seen Panfilo, or that thy husband is Panfilo. Fancy can adapt itself to

any purpose, and a good imagination can be so used as to effect wonders. This alone can restore thy cheerfulness, a thing which thou shouldst desire exceedingly if thy present anguish harms thee as much as all thy deeds and words show that it does."

To such phrases, or, at least, to phrases resembling them, did I listen, not once, but frequently, giving them my grave and earnest attention, and, albeit they troubled me much, yet did I know them to be true; but still my badly disposed mind derived little profit from them. Indeed, after a time, I began tossing about in violent excitement, and it happened at last that I worked myself up to a state of furious irritation and, careless of the presence of my nurse, and, in a hoarse and raging voice (that most unseemly thing when it comes from a woman) which was frequently interrupted by floods of bitter tears, I said:

"Ye Furies of hell, Tisiphone, Megæra, Alecto! ye who pierce the souls of the sorrowful with your secret stings! make straight your appalling locks till every hair stands on end! To your ferocious serpents add new terrors! Then fly swiftly to the foul chamber of that shameless woman; light the abominable torches that shall witness her union with my stolen lover, wave them above the enamored pair as a sign of baneful augury to their most abominable loves! And all ye other denizens of the sunless abodes of Dis, and all ye gods of the immortal Stygian realm, be present there, and with your horrid moans strike terror into the breasts of these traitors! And thou, abhorred Owl, shriek thy bitterest cry above the ill-omened roof! And ye, O Harpies, threaten them with future harm! Shades of the nether world, eternal Chaos, and Darkness, everlasting foes of light, do ye all seize on the accursed house, and let not their guilty eyes have comfort of the light of day. Ye wreak vengeance on the crimes ye hate. Let therefore this hatred of

yours enter their minds; inspire them with mutual dislike, and engender between them relentless war!"

After this I heaved many bitter sighs, and, in a broken voice, I continued:

"O most iniquitous woman, whosoever thou may'st be, for to me thou art unknown, thou dost now possess the lover for whom I have so long waited, and I pine away in misery far apart from him. Thou holdest fast the guerdon of my toil, and I remain with empty hands, robbed of the fruit of all my prayers. I have addressed all the orisons and borne all the incense to the altars of the gods for the prosperity of him whom thou hast stealthily torn from me, and those prayers and this incense were graciously received by them, but for thy benefit. Now, I do not at all know by what art thou hast expelled me from his heart and taken thy place therein; but I know that so it is. May the time come when thou shalt be as satisfied with thy work as I am now! And, should it be difficult for him to fall in love with a third woman, may the gods divide him from thee in the manner in which they divided the judge of Mount Ida from his Grecian dame, or the youth of Abydos from lamenting Hero, or the wretched sons of Æolus from their loves; and may their harshest judgment fall on thee, while he remains safe!

"O vilest of women, thou shouldst have known, when thou didst gaze on his face, that he belonged to another. If thou didst know this—and sure I am thou didst—what wickedness was thine to take for thyself that which was another's? Certainly thou didst this with hostile intent; of that I am assured. Therefore, will I always pursue thee as my enemy and the purloiner of that which is mine. And I shall always, as long as I live, fondly entertain the hope of thy death. I shall always pray that thine be not an ordinary death; but rather, that thou mayest be, like a stone from a sling, hurled among thine

enemies, and that neither sepulture nor funeral pyre be granted to thy mangled corpse, but that, rent and torn, it may satiate the greedy dogs. I pray that, when they have consumed thy soft flesh, they may fight ravenously for thy bones, tearing them from one another and gnawing them, thus demonstrating that, just as they rob one another, so thou, too, didst love to rob others when thou wert alive. No day, no hour, no moment, shall pass without my lips uttering a curse on thee; and to this there will never be an end. Sooner shall the heavenly Bear plunge into the Ocean, sooner shall the ravening waves of Silician Charybdis be still, and the dogs of Scylla be silent; and ripe corn spring from the Ionian sea, and dusky night give forth light out of her darkness, and water and fire, and death and life, and the sea and the winds, dwell together in most harmonious concord. So long as the Ganges is warm and the Ister cold, so long as the hills bear oaks and the meadows supply soft pasturage, shall my warfare with thee continue. Nor shall death end the conflict, for I will pursue thee among the spirits and task all my ingenuity to inflict on thee all the injuries and all the insults that lie within my power. If, haply, thou shouldst survive me, no matter what be the manner of my death, and no matter whither my miserable spirit may have taken flight, I shall make use of my strongest efforts to release it, so that it may enter into thee and drive thee raging mad, as happened to the virgins who were filled with the spirit of Apollo. Or thou wilt see me suddenly appear in thy presence and watch thee in such wise that thou wilt be stricken with horror. I will often also appear to thee in most appalling dreams during the silent night; and, in short, whatever thou mayest be doing, thou canst not avoid seeing me pass before thine eyes. I will not leave thee a moment's quiet, wherever thou art, ever complaining of the bitter wrong thou hast done me. Thus, while

thou livest, thou shalt always be made wretched by me, stung as it were by one of the Furies; and when thou art dead, I will be the occasion to thee of pangs more grievous still.

*"Oimè!* wretched creature that I am! of what avail are my words? I only threaten thee, while thou dost really injure me, and, as long as thou hast my lover in thy power, thou carest as little for my threats as does the most puissant monarch for those of his lowliest serf. Would that I had the genius of Dædalus, or the chariot of Medea, so that either by fabricating wings and fitting them to my shoulders, or by being borne rapidly through the air as she was, I might straightway find myself at the spot where thou dost hide thy theft! Oh, what bitter and terrible words should I hurl at the traitor youth and at thee, stealer of another's property! How my menacing and fear-inspiring face would appall ye! With what tremendous insults should I revile your deeds! With what exceeding shame should I fill ye for the sins committed both by thee and by him! Then, without any restraint or delay, would I proceed with my vengeance, O basest of women, tearing out thy hair in handfuls and mangling thy false face, dragging thee to and fro in thy lover's presence until I had satiated my anger! Nor should this suffice. I would rend thy garments into rags. Nor should this suffice: I would so plow thy pleasing countenance with my sharp nails that it should ever remain a testimony of my revenge to his false eyes. And thy tender body would I lacerate all over with my hungry teeth, and, leaving it to be healed by him who flatters thee, return to my sad dwelling."

While I was hissing out these words, with gleaming eyes, through my clenched teeth, with my fists doubled, as if ready to strike, it almost seemed to me that I had executed a part of the longed-for revenge. But my old nurse, shedding many tears, said:

"O daughter, inasmuch as thou knowest the savage tyranny of that god who troubles thee, restrain thyself and moderate thy sorrow. And if the pity thou owest to thyself does not move thee, let a care for thine own honor move thee, which, because of thy lightness and inconstancy, may receive a fresh stain, and so new shame be added to the old fault. At least, hold thy peace, lest, haply, thy husband learn of those things, and have a twofold reason to complain of thy misconduct."

Then, being thus put in mind of my betrayed spouse, and penetrated with a new affection for him, I wept more unrestrainedly than ever; and, revolving in my mind the violated faith and the badly kept laws, I thus addressed my nurse:

"O most faithful companion of my woes, of little can my husband complain. He who was the occasion of my sinfulness has been the most harsh cleanser of the same: I have received, and am receiving, the reward I deserve. No more terrible punishment can my husband inflict on me than that which I have suffered from my lover. Death alone is the sole punishment—if death be really as painful as it is said to be—which my husband could add to the chastisements I already endure. Let him come, then, and give me death. It will not be for me a punishment; nay rather, it will be a joy, because for it I yearn, and it will be more pleasing to me if it be inflicted by his hand than by mine own. But if he refuse to grant it, or if it does not come of its own accord, then have I sufficient ingenuity to find it for myself, seeing that I hope for it as the sole end of my every sorrow. Hell, the extremest infliction reserved for the miserable, has no tortures, even in its most fiery depths, that can compare with mine. Tityus is held up as an example of the severest punishment by the ancient authors, who tell us that his liver is always preyed upon by vultures, and that it grows again as fast as it is devoured. And

certainly I do not esteem such a punishment as by any means slight; but it is slight if compared with mine. The vultures indeed tore that giant's liver, but a hundred thousand cares are constantly rending my heart asunder more ravenously than could the beak of any bird. Tantalus, they also tell us, is always parched with thirst and tortured with hunger, albeit he stands in the midst of water, and most delicious fruits are within his reach. Certainly I endure quite as frightful pangs as he, for I live in the midst of every sort of worldly delights, yet, albeit I desire my lover with most violent longing, can I not have him, and the punishment I suffer is as great as those of Tantalus. Yea, greater: he has hopes that he may, sometime or other, quaff the neighboring waves or lay hold of the apples. But I have not even hope, and now altogether despair of that which might have been my consolation.

"But why should I weary myself with relating, one by one, all the other chastisements of hell, since the punishment I suffer is greater than them all jointly or separately? And, even if my anguish were not greater than theirs, yet the very necessity of concealing my sorrows, or, at least, the occasion of them, while they are at liberty to manifest theirs by loud shrieks and by gestures expressive of their pangs, would suffice to demonstrate that my sufferings must be deemed more immeasurable than theirs. *Oimè!* how infinitely more fiercely does a fire burn that is confined within a narrow space than that which has ample room for the spread of its flames! And how much more grievous and woful a thing it is not to be able to divulge one's sorrows and spread abroad the cause of one's anguish, but rather to be forced by a sense of seemliness to hide it deep down in the heart and mask its existence under the cheerful expression of the face! Therefore, death would not be a pain to me, but rather a release from pain. Let my beloved hus-

band, then, come, and at the same moment avenge himself and relieve me from misery. Let him plunge his dagger into this wretched breast, and set free the joyless soul. Let him force out from my bosom both my love and its chastisement with the copious effusion of my blood; and, as the iniquity which I have committed deserves, let him tear to pieces that vile heart which has betrayed him and welcomed his enemy."

Thereafter, when my old nurse perceived that I had made an end of speaking and was now bathed in tears, she, in a low voice, began as follows:

"O dear daughter, what things are these that thou utterest? Thy words are foolish, and more foolish still is thy meaning. I have grown very old in this world and have seen many things, and doubtless I have been a witness to the loves of many ladies; and, albeit I do not presume to rank myself with ladies like thee, nevertheless, I have not escaped from the poison of love in my day; for it is as hurtful to humble folk as it is to the powerful, and sometimes much more so, inasmuch as to the poor the road to happiness is often closed, while to those who possess riches it is always open. Nor have I ever heard or felt that that which thou speakest of as being almost impossible, because it has been so disastrous to thee, is so hard to be borne as thou claimest. Thy anguish, great as it may be, is not so great that thou shouldst waste away on account of it as thou art doing or shouldst be forced by it to seek death, upon whom thou callest, being more wrathful than well advised. Well am I aware that the madness which is spurred on by fiery anger is blind, and recks not to hide itself; neither does it endure any restraint, nor does it fear death; on the contrary, rushing forward of its own accord, it hastens to meet the deadly points of the sharpest swords. If it should allow itself to be somewhat chilled, I doubt not but the part of the soul which had been cool-



ed would begin at once to perceive the folly of such extravagance. Therefore, my daughter, resist its grievous assaults, pay some little heed to my words, and fortify thy spirits with the examples I have held up before thee. Thou complainest (if I have well gathered the meaning of thy words) of the beloved youth who has parted from thee, of his broken pledges, of his new love, and of his new lady, and, in thy complaint, thou declarest that no punishment ever endured is equal to thine. Well, certainly, if thou art as wise as I wish thee to be, thou wilt take a useful and effective medicine for all these things; that is, if thou but give attention to what I say. The youth whom thou lovest should doubtless, according to the laws of love, love thee as thou lovest him; if he does not do so, he does ill. But there is no force which can constrain him to do so. Everyone can use the gift of his own liberty as it likes him. If thou love him so passionately that the loss of his love afflicts thee with intolerable anguish, that is not his fault, nor canst thou justly complain of him because of that: thou thyself art the chiefest cause of thine own anguish. Although Love be a most puissant lord, and his power inexpressibly great, yet was he not, therefore, able to thrust this young man into thy heart against thy will. The idle bent of thy mind and thy predisposition to love him were the beginning of thy folly, and if thou hadst stoutly resisted then, all this would not have happened, and thou wouldst have now been free and able to scorn him and everyone else, just as he, as thou sayest, now scorns thee, no longer caring for thee. When thou didst surrender thy liberty to him, it may have been needful for thee to regulate thine actions according to his good pleasure; it is his good pleasure now to remain far apart from thee, let it be thine to remain far apart from him without disturbing thyself. If he pledged thee his faith with tears, and swore to return, he did not do anything

new or strange, but did what lovers have been wont to do since time began: such customs are those which are most used in the court of thy god. But if he has not kept his promise to thee, no judge will ever be found deciding that in this he has done wrong, nor will anyone ever be discovered who can say: 'He did ill.' He is not the first who has done such things, nor art thou the first to whom such things have happened.

"Furthermore, let us suppose for a moment that the gentle lady has caught him in her net by means of her words and acts. To-day it is the custom of the world that everyone should look out for his or her own advantage, and that all, without any concern for others, should take their pleasure wherever they find it, if they can. The good lady, haply not less wise than thee in matters of love, has decided to appropriate him to herself. And what hinders thee from doing the like with some one else? Such a thing I, indeed, by no means approve. But yet, if thou canst not help thyself, and if thou art constrained to follow love elsewhere, because otherwise thou canst not redeem thy liberty from him, although thou wishest to do so, then there are numberless youths in this city, in every way superior to him, who would, as I believe, gladly become thy subjects. The delight thou wilt take in such noble persons will banish him from thy mind, just as, perhaps, the delight he takes in the new lady has banished thee from his. Abandon, then, the sorrows which thou hast of thine own will chosen, and live cheerfully, trusting to the gods. It has often happened that when persons supposed they were farthest removed from happiness they have at that very moment unthinkingly entered upon it. Many a bark that has sailed triumphantly through the deep seas has been wrecked at the very mouth of a secure haven; and many another, which had altogether despaired of safety, has found itself at last riding unharmed in some

land-locked port. Many a tree have I seen smitten by the flaming bolt of Jove; yet, after a few days, it was crowned with verdant foliage; and I have seen others, which, albeit tended with the greatest care, withered away from some unknown accident. Fortune has various methods of action; and, just as she has been the cause of thine anguish, so, if thou only feedest thy soul with hope, she will be the cause of thy joy."

Not once, but several times, did my sage nurse endeavor to persuade me with arguments like these, believing that she might in this wise chase away from me the pangs and the anxieties which, as I well knew, death alone could put an end to. But her words produced little fruit, or rather none at all. My mind was occupied with other things, and the greater part of her reasonings was lost in the air.

Daily did my misfortunes fill more and more my doleful soul, so that often, hiding my face with my arms, I lay supine upon my luxurious couch, and revolved divers and most important matters in my mind.

I am about to relate things so frightful that it would seem impossible for a woman even to think of them, if things still more frightful had not only been said but done in the past. I, feeling that my heart was overcome by unutterable sorrow, and being driven to desperation by the thought that my lover was so far away from me, spake to myself as follows:

"Lo, the same cause which Sidonian Dido had for abandoning the world, Panfilo has given me, yea, even a cause far worse. It is his pleasure that I should forsake my country and seek a new region; and, as I am subject to him, I will do that which it is his pleasure I should do; and, at one and the same moment, I shall satisfy my love, atone for my guilt, and make reparation to my betrayed husband, in a manner befitting my dignity. And, if the spirits released from their corporeal

prison have any freedom in their new world, I will rejoin him without delay, and where my body cannot be, my soul shall be instead. I will die. And, as no other hand would be so cruel as to execute the punishment I have merited, it is right and proper that I myself should execute it on myself. I will, therefore, lay hold of death without delay; and, albeit the thought of it is most gloomy, yet do I expect more pleasure from it than I have found in life."

When I was finally fixed in my resolve, I deliberated within my own mind on the thousand different ways in which I might escape from life, and which one of them I should select. The first thought that occurred to me was to use the sword or dagger; they had helped many out of existence, and I reflected that it was by one of such weapons Dido sought her release. After this, I recollected the deaths of Byblis and Amata, and either mode of dying at first appealed to me as a suitable way of ending my life. But I was more tender of my reputation than I was of myself, and, having less fear of death than of the manner of dying, I concluded that the one mode was full of infamy, and the other excessively cruel, and so I resolved to reject both.

Then I fancied I should like to do as the people of Saguntum and of Abydos did. The former because they feared Hannibal, and the latter because they feared Philip of Macedon, flung all their possessions and themselves into the flames. But, seeing that if I did this, I should inflict a most serious loss upon my dear husband, who was guiltless of my misfortunes, I discarded this method of dying, as I had the two preceding ones. Came to my mind subsequently the poisonous juices which signalized the last day of Socrates, Sophonisba, and Hannibal, as well as of many other princes. But, seeing that it would take considerable time to gather the plants that produced them, and fearing that my pur-

pose might change in the mean while, I rejected that plan also.

Next, I thought of swallowing live coals, like Portia; but, dreading that I could not do so unseen, I laid aside this idea likewise. Came to my mind then the deaths of Ino and Melicertes, and, similarly, that of Erisichthon. But the necessity of going such a long way in search of the one death, and the delay that must ensue before I achieved the other, made me pause; besides, I imagined in the latter case that it must be frightfully painful to have to feed for such a length of time on one's own body. After I had discussed within my own mind all these different modes of death, I bethought me of that of Perdix, who fell from the loftiest tower in Crete. This manner of death pleased me best of all, for not only would my destruction be infallibly sure, but it would not entail any disgrace or infamy, and I said:

"I shall fling myself from the topmost tower of my palace; my body will be broken into a hundred pieces; then I shall surrender my unhappy soul to the gloomy gods of the under-world. Nor will there be anyone who shall think that rage or madness was the occasion of my death; rather will everyone be inclined to attribute it to an unlucky accident; all the people will curse Fortune, and shed piteous tears because of my fate."

This resolution was firmly fixed in my mind, and it gratified me exceedingly to have determined to follow it, for I thought very great compassion would be felt for me, albeit I acted so inhumanly against myself.

My purpose was now unalterable, and I merely awaited the proper time for fulfilling it, when suddenly a chill seized on my bones, piercing each one of them, and making me tremble all over; and with the chill came these words, which I found myself uttering:

"Wretch, what art thou thinking of doing? Dost thou wish, through spite and anger, to become a thing

of no account? Why, even if thou wert likely to die because of some serious illness, shouldst thou not make every effort to live, so that thou mightest have, at least, a chance of seeing Panfilo again before death? Knowest thou not that, being dead, thou, most assuredly, canst never see him? Will no affection toward thee on his part be able to effect anything? What availed it to the too impatient Phyllis the tardy return of Demophoön? She, covered with blossoms, felt his approach without any delight; yet, if she had but waited, a woman, and not a tree, would have received him. Live, therefore; he will return here, some time or other. Whether he return as thy lover or thy enemy, still thou wilt love him; haply, too, thou mayest be able to see him and to force him to feel some compassion for thine anguish. He is not made of oak, or hewn out of hard rock; he does not drink the milk of tigers or of other beasts more savage still. He has not a heart of adamant or of steel, and cannot be merciless or indifferent to thy woes. If he be not overcome with pity when he beholdeth thee, then will it be more lawful for thee to die. Thou hast now endured thy dismal life for more than a year; surely thou canst endure it for more than another. At no time can death be lacking to those who wish it. It will reach thee much faster and with better augury than if it happened now; and thou wilt be able to depart with the hope that he—albeit to thee a most cruel enemy—may shed a few tears over thy lifeless body. Abandon, then, thy suddenly formed design; since they who do things in haste are often fain to rue their folly. This is a deed that cannot be followed by repentance; and even if it were followed by repentance, it would be out of thy power to undo what thou hadst done.”

Although my mind was occupied by such thoughts yet was it long in suspense as to whether I should or

should not execute my hasty resolution. But, being goaded by Megæra's sharp-pointed stings, I was moved to persevere in my intent, and I silently determined to carry it into effect. Speaking pleasantly to my nurse, who uttered not a word, I altered the gloomy expression of my countenance, assumed an air of cheerfulness, and, in hopes that I might prevail on her to leave me to myself, I said:

"Dearest mother, thy words, whereof every single one is pregnant with truth, have found a firm place in my breast. But, to the end that this wild madness may be banished from my foolish mind, prithee go away from here for a little while, and allow me to sleep, for of sleep I am most fain."

She, being very sagacious and having a foreboding of my purpose, encouraged me to try to sleep, and, as if in obedience to my orders, removed from my bedside, but only for a little distance. But to all my entreaties she answered that she would not leave the chamber. Fearing that she might suspect my intention, I bore with her presence, albeit most reluctantly. However, I fancied that, when she saw me so quiet and undisturbed, she must retire before long. I closed my eyes, then, and feigned to be sunk in profoundest slumber. Yet when I thought of the deception I was practising, a deception which nothing in my features revealed, and reflected that in a few short hours I must bid farewell to life, I was in reality exceeding sorrowful.

As I perceived that my old nurse persisted in remaining in my chamber, I began to fear that the necessity of postponing my death might at last result in the entire abandonment of my purpose, or that my death might be prevented by some accident. I spread out my arms on my couch, as if I would embrace it, and said, weeping:

"O couch, God be with thee! May He render thee

more agreeable to her who will come after me than thou has been to me!"

Afterward, as I was casting my eyes around the chamber which I hoped I might never see again, a sudden pain seized me; I felt, as it were, a crushing weight on my breast, and every nerve in my body quivered. I tried to rise, but my limbs, overcome by some horrible dread, were unable to support me. Every time I attempted to rise, I fell upon my face. Then ensued a most fierce and terrible battle between my timorous spirits and my wrathful soul, the latter wishing to escape, and the former holding it fast where it was. But my soul at length conquered, and driving away from me the cold dread that had possessed me, resumed all its strength and inflamed me all over with frenzied anguish. And now, although the ghastly hues of death were depicted on my countenance, I rose impetuously, and like the strong bull which, after it has received the mortal stroke, with jumps and bounds rushes furiously hither and thither, so I leaped from my bed to the floor, and followed madly in the footsteps of Tisiphone, who ran before me, and I kept behind the Fury until she reached the stairs that led to the highest part of my palace. There turning round, and gazing wildly at such parts of the house as were before me, I said, in accents faint and broken:

"O house, to me most unpropitious, farewell forever, and let my lover know of my disgrace, should he return; and thou, O dearest husband, be comforted, and seek for another Fiammetta with a wiser mind than I had. And ye, O darling sisters, and ye, my kindred, and all ye ladies who were my friends and companions, and all ye faithful servants, may the gods be with you all, and may they be gracious to you!"

Raging, and quite beside myself, I was about to resume my mad course after these words. But my old



nurse, like one who had been suddenly aroused from sleep at the end of some frightful nightmare, was so astounded that she dropped the distaff from her hand. Then, recovering her senses, which such a sight had bewildered, she followed me with her weary limbs, at the same time crying as loud as she could. In a voice so changed that I could hardly have believed it to be hers, she screamed:

"Whither, O daughter, art thou running? What Fury drives thee before her? Is this the fruit of my words, which thou thyself didst declare had given thee the greatest comfort? Where art thou going? Wait for me!"

Then, in a voice, if possible, still louder, she shrieked:

"Hither, all ye within the palace! Seize this frenzied lady and restrain her madness."

Her shouting was bootless, and still more futile was her attempt to come up with me. As for myself, meseemed that wings had grown on my shoulders, and, fleetier than the fleetest of winds, I rushed to my death. But one of those unforeseen occurrences that so often obstruct human purposes, whether they be virtuous or wicked, was the cause that resulted in my being alive to-day. The train of my robe, long as it was, did not of itself interfere with my intent, or in any wise check my course; but, while I was running my fastest, it happened to get entangled in a piece of wood shaped like a fork, and so put a stop to my impetuous flight. I attempted to pull it away, and had partly succeeded, although I left a considerable portion of it behind me, when my old nurse came up and pounced upon me. I remember that my face became crimson, and I screamed at her:

"O thou wretched old creature; fly from here, if thou carest for thy life! Thou mayest think that thou art serving me, whilst, in good sooth, thou art doing me

the greatest disservice. Leave me to execute the deadly task to which I have devoted myself with the most determined resolution. He who prevents from dying a person who longs to die, really slays that person. Thou, therefore, hast become my murderess, while thinking to rescue me from death; and thou art my bitterest enemy in trying to prolong the pangs that I suffer."

She continued screaming, and, at the same time, threw herself upon me, exhibiting a strength which I could hardly have believed she possessed. Little, however, would her strength have availed her, had not my maidens run up from every quarter, summoned by her cries, and held me prisoner. I managed to fling them off from me, nimbly slipping from their grasp, and, if my strength had been a little greater, I believe I could have freed myself from them entirely. But I was at last conquered, and, utterly exhausted by my struggles, I was led back to the chamber which I had hoped never to see again. How often did I say to them, with tearful voice:

"O ye vilest of slaves, what shameless audacity has led you to act thus? Who has given you power to use such violence to your mistress and make her a captive? What madness, ye wretches, has inspired ye to such a deed? And thou, most unworthy and heartless nurse of this miserable body, thou, the future reminder of all my woes, by what right hast thou prevented me from fulfilling my last and most earnest desire? Art thou not well aware that thou wouldst be doing me a greater kindness by bidding me die than by hindering me from dying? Let me execute the purpose which I have resolved to execute, and let me act as my own judgment prompts me, if, in good sooth, thou lovest me as well as I believe thou dost. If thou art as full of compassion for me as thy demeanor would imply, prove that compassion of thine by doing thy very best to defend my

reputation, which will doubtless be attacked after my death, seeing that to prevent that death thy labor will be vain. Thinkest thou to keep away from my hands the sword and dagger, the keen points whereof I long to feel in my breast? Canst thou hinder me from having recourse to the dismal halter, or to fire, or to noxious plants? Knowest thou what thou hast done? By prolonging for a little space a most miserable life, and by delaying for a while a death that, but for thee, might, haply, have come to me without infamy, thou wilt to that death have added shame. Wretched woman that thou art, all thy watchfulness will not avail thee, seeing that death is to be found everywhere and in all things. Let me, therefore, die now, lest my anguish becoming even more unendurable than it is at present, I seek a death more awful and hideous than that which thou hast frustrated."

While I was uttering these words, in a most lamentable voice, I could not keep my hands quiet, but throwing myself on my maids, I plucked out the hair of this one in handfuls, tore the face of that one with my nails, until streams of blood flowed down her cheeks, and pulled to pieces the garments of others so that they were a miserable spectacle to behold! But neither my old nurse nor my abused and lacerated servants ever made any reply; they showed the utmost pity for me, on the contrary, and, weeping, rendered me what services they could. I then tried to get the better of them by words; but my words were bootless. Thereupon I cried aloud, at the top of my voice, to my hands:

"O ye wicked hands, hands powerful for every evil, hands so skilful in adorning and enhancing my beauty, that ye have been exceedingly instrumental in causing me to be desired of him whom I love beyond measure. Therefore, since your service has brought me such bane, in requital thereof mangle as cruelly as you like this

body to which ye belong, tear it asunder, and release from it the stern and implacable soul that dwells therein, with much effusion of blood. Pluck out the heart that blind love has smitten, and, as all other weapons have been placed beyond your reach, ruthlessly rend it asunder with your nails!"

*Oimè!* how ready were my willing hands to execute my purpose, had not my nimble and watchful maids prevented it by holding them fast with their own! Thereupon did my afflicted and importunate nurse, in a sorrowful voice, address me, in some such words as these:

"O my dear daughter, I beseech thee, by this wretched breast from which thou didst receive thy first nutriment, to listen calmly to what I am about to say. I will not try by words to prevent thee from grieving, nor will I ask thee to banish from thy soul the anger which has impelled thee to this, or even to endure thy lot with a peaceful and submissive mind; I will only endeavor to impress on thy bewildered understanding that which concerns thy life and honor. Yet, surely it is befitting that a lady so famous as thou art for virtue should neither become the thrall of sorrow, nor run away from misfortune, as if conquered by it. It is not a virtue to call for death or to fear life, as thou dost; but to withstand the ills that befall us and never to fly before them—that, in sooth, is the highest virtue. I cannot comprehend why those who overthrow their own destinies and fling away from them all the benefits and advantages of their own lives, as thou hast done, should either seek death or fear life: to wish to do either is the inclination of the coward. If, then, it is thy desire, as it seems to be, to be supremely wretched, do not seek death, seeing that death is the ultimate expeller of all wretchedness. Banish from thy mind that insensate fury which, as it seems to me, leads thee at one and the same time to desire to have thy lover and not to

have him Dost thou believe thou wilt gain possession of him by becoming nothing thyself?"

To this I made no reply. But, meanwhile, the greatest commotion and excitement prevailed, not only through the spacious halls of the palace, but in the streets leading to it; and, just as when the howling of a wolf is heard, those in the neighborhood are wont to run together to the same spot, so everyone hastened from all the different quarters, and, in evident anxiety and alarm, inquired what was the matter. I, however, had already forbidden those who were acquainted with what had occurred to reveal it, and ordered them to return such untrue answers as might satisfy those who questioned them, and yet give no hint of what had really happened. Ran up to me also my dear husband, and his sisters, and my beloved kinsmen and kinswomen, and my other friends; and, having led them astray as I had led the others, I was the object of their heartfelt pity, whereas my deceitfulness deserved their reprobation. They all, while blaming me for my excessive dolefulness, yet tasked their ingenuity to comfort me. It betided afterward, however, that some believed me to have been stung by one of the Furies, and these, almost sure that I was out of my senses, watched me closely; but others, more charitable, declaring grief, not madness, to be the cause of my present state, as was, indeed, the case, mocked at what the aforementioned people said about me, and showed exceeding sympathy with my situation. I was visited by a great many, but was for several days so stupefied that I recognized nobody, and was silently and discreetly looked after by my sagacious nurse.

There is no sort of anger, how furious soever it be, that is not moderated and even chilled by the influence of time. After I had remained in the condition already described for several days, I recognized my errors, and saw clearly that every word spoken by my wise old

nurse was true; and I wept bitterly when I thought of my past folly. But, albeit my rage and madness died away, being altogether consumed by time, yet did not my love experience any change, even in the slightest degree. Nor was there any diminution of my melancholy, and the thought that I had been forsaken for another continued to wring my heart with anguish. And often did I seek the advice of my prudent nurse, trying to discover some plan which would be effective in bringing my lover back to me. Sometimes we decided to send him a most piteous letter which would contain a full relation of my lamentable case; and again we concluded to announce to him the martyrdom I had so long endured by word of mouth, employing for this purpose a discreet messenger. Although my nurse was so old, and the journey so long and toilsome, yet did she express her willingness to go at once and meet my lover herself. After a profound and thorough consideration of all the circumstances, we judged that a letter, however touching and pitiful, would fail to remove his present love from Panfilo's heart, albeit I wrote one, for all that, and it had just the success we anticipated. To send my nurse to him I knew to be clearly out of the question, for she would never be able to reach him alive; nor did I judge it prudent to commit such a message to anyone else. All these plans being rejected as inadequate, I came to the conclusion that, if I was to obtain possession of Panfilo again, the only chance of success before me was to go for him myself. Various ideas passed through my mind, as to the manner in which this might be accomplished. But, when I laid them before my nurse, they were all put aside by her for good and lawful reasons.

Sometimes I thought of donning the garb of a pilgrim, and, in company with one of my friends upon whom I could rely, wending my way to his distant

country, and tracing him to his abode. But, although such a mode of traveling seemed to me possible, I knew that it would be attended with very great peril to my honor, for I had learned how such pilgrims, especially if they be at all comely, are treated by wicked men. In addition to this, I was bound to consult my dear husband in such a matter, and I could not see how it was possible for me to go on such a journey without him, or, at least, without his permission; and this it was useless for me to think of expecting. I abandoned this notion, then, as being entirely futile.

Another thought suddenly flashed across my mind, a thought, too, somewhat roguish and malicious. And, albeit certain circumstances prevented this scheme from succeeding at the time, yet have I good hope of gathering some benefit from it in the future, provided that I be still living. Now, this was the scheme which I finally resolved on adopting. I feigned that I had made a certain vow, at the time when I was overwhelmed by the misfortunes already described, the which I would fulfil, if God rescued me from the same. To satisfy the conditions of this vow, it was necessary that I should pass through the country of Panfilo. Surely, I thought, if this plan of mine be crowned with success, I shall find no difficulty in communicating with my lover and showing him the real reason of my pilgrimage. My vow and my desire to accomplish it I declared to my dear husband, who, with much cheerfulness, promised to accompany me and supply me with every aid I needed for observing it duly. But, as I have hinted above, he did not consider the time convenient, and he told me that I must wait until a favorable opportunity arose. This delay was most grievous to me, and I began to fear that my scheme might fail, after all. Wherefore I invented various other devices; but they all came to naught. I bethought me then of the marvels that Hecate was said

to accomplish by her enchantments, and I had many conversations with divers persons who boasted that they were well versed in all her sorceries, and that I might entrust my fate to the frightful spirits they could invoke with the utmost security; some promised to transport me in the twinkling of an eye to the spot where Panfilo was; others, to free his mind from every sort of love, except that which he erstwhile had felt for me and to bring him back to me at once; others said they would liberate me from him and restore me the freedom I formerly enjoyed. I wished ardently that I might have fruition of some of these promises; but, after a while, I discovered that these people were more generous with words than with deeds. After they had several times deceived me with vain hopes, I dismissed them and their sorceries from my mind, and decided to wait until my dear husband was ready to assist me in the fulfilment of my fictitious vow.



## CHAPTER VII

*Wherein Madonna Fiammetta shows how another Panfilo, but not hers, came to the city, how, being told thereof, she was filled with a false delight, and how, at last discovering her error, she fell back again into her former doleful state*

**Y**anguish continued, notwithstanding the hope of the journey in the future. The heavens revolved, carrying with them the sun in their course; one day followed another without change; and I, whose love and sorrow never showed any signs of waning, was worn out with waiting for the fulfilment of the hopes I had cherished, which, seemingly, were never to be realized. Already was that Bull who swam across the sea with Europa holding Phœbus and all his light within the boundaries of his realm, and the days, expelling the nights from a part of their domain, were expanding to their greatest length. And Zephyrus, his scarf all filled with flowers, had come unlooked-for, and with his gentle, perfumed breath, made cease the riotous strife that headstrong Boreas loves. The hazy darkness from the cold air he chased, and the bright snow from the frowning mountain peaks, and cleansed the meadows of the rain-drenched soil. Every flower and herb that lay drooping felt his soft touch and rose to greater beauty. The pallid whiteness wherewith the winter's cold had erst endued the stately trees was now exchanged for a green vesture that enrobed their limbs with its luxuriant growth. It was the season of the gracious Spring, who pours upon the earth her wealth of odorous flowers of every kind, violet and rose and star-eyed daisy, and all the blooms

that in their loveliness vie with the flowers that span-gled Paradise, and every meadow had its own Narcissus.

All our citizens were wiling away the time in every sort of blithe *divertissement* and merrymaking, which, in deed, were more numerous in our city than any that had ever been held in Rome, our holy parent. The theaters, too, resounded with the music of songs and of all kinds of minstrelsy, and invited lovers to rejoice in their love. The young men, when they jousted with their glittering lances, when they dashed forward on their fleet coursers, or when, with masterly dexterity, they showed what a tight hand they could keep on their fiery steeds, as they champed the foaming bit, afforded a sight most wonderful to behold. The damsels, enchanted by what they saw, cast delighted glances, from under their brows garlanded with fresh leaves, at their lovers, now from lofty windows and now from lowly doors; and this one, by means of a new gift, that one, by means of words, comforted her lover with her love.

I alone, like a recluse, kept myself solitary and apart from all this revelry, I alone, depressed by the failure of my hopes, was only rendered the more disconsolate by the gayety around me. Nothing was pleasing to me; no amusement could bring me any relief; neither thoughts nor words could comfort me. Nor did I permit green leaf, or flower, or any pleasant thing to touch my hands, nor did I regard them with pleasure. I had grown envious of others' joys, and I longed with hungry eagerness to see every lady treated by love and fortune as I had been treated. *Oimè!* how often did I glean some consolation from hearing of the miseries and calamities in which certain lovers had been recently involved!

But while the gods were keeping me in this frame of mind, lo, I again became the victim of double-faced

Fortune, who, sometimes, in order to afflict the wretched with keener pangs, shows for a time a changed and pleasant countenance to them in their misery, so that they, abandoning themselves to her power, may afterward lose the transient joy and fall into deeper affliction. Should they then continue to lean upon her they find themselves flung down in the middle of their course, like unto that luckless Icarus, who, trusting too much to his wings, soared upward as if to reach the heavens, but fell eventually into the blue waters of the sea that thereafter bore his name.

This is how she managed, for some little time, to fill me with a vain and false delight that for the while restored my soul to peace. After more than four months had elapsed since I heard those woful words about my faithless lover, on a certain day, when I was more than usually despondent, my old nurse, with a quicker step than her age would lead one to believe possible, entered the chamber wherein I was sitting. Drops of perspiration hung thick on her aged countenance. She sank on a chair and began beating her breast with her trembling hand. There was, however, a joyful light in her eyes, and often did she try to speak, but failed; for her excitement affected her lungs, and she had to break off in the middle of a word. Marveling much at her state, I said:

"Dear nurse, what so great trouble is this which has laid hold of thee? What is it thou art in such a hurry to utter? Thou dost breathe with difficulty. Why not first give some repose to thy agitated spirit? Are the tidings thou bringest pleasant or painful? Am I to make ready to flee away from this place or to die? Prithee, what am I to do? Thy face, I do not know why or wherefore, somewhat revives my fading hopes. But yet everything has gone so contrary to them for such a length of time that I am ever in dread, as the

wretched are always wont to be, lest worse mishaps may follow those already endured. Speak, therefore, at once. Do not keep me in suspense. What is the cause of the agility thou hast just displayed? Tell me whether debonair god or malignant Fury has driven thee hither."

Thereupon the old woman, hardly recovered from her faintness, interrupted me, and, in a somewhat exultant tone, said:

"O my sweet daughter, be joyful. Thou wilt have no cause of fear because of the things I am about to relate. Cast away every sorrow, and let the gladness that once possessed thee be thine again. Thy lover has returned!"

As soon as these words entered my mind, my delight was for a moment unbounded, as the expression of mine eyes plainly proved; but the misery to which I had grown accustomed quickly resumed its empire, and I could not believe in such happiness. On the contrary, I burst into tears, and said:

"Dearest nurse, by thy many years and thine aged limbs, which must soon be entering into the eternal rest, do not mock wretched me, whose sorrows should be thine. Sooner shall the rivers return to their source, sooner shall Hesperus seek the companionship of the bright noonday; sooner shall Phœbe give brightness to the night with the rays of her brother, than my ungrateful lover return! Who does not know that he now spends the joyful hours with another, whom he loves more than ever? Wherever he might be, he would much more gladly go back to her from thence, than part from her now to come here."

To which my nurse straightway made this answer:

"O Fiammetta, so may not the gods receive benignantly my soul when it leaves this old body, if I have uttered aught but the truth! Nor would it be seemly in one of my age to deceive anyone in such wise as thou

dost accuse me of doing, and, least of all, thee, whom I love more than anything else in the whole world."

"Then," I returned, "how has this thing whereof thou speakest come to thine ears? From whom hast thou learned it? Tell me quick, to the end that, if it be true, I may at once take delight from the happy tidings."

And rising from the place where I was seated, I eagerly advanced toward the old woman, who said:

"Having some matters to attend to in connection with the affairs of the household, I went this morning to the seashore. I was walking along slowly, and then stood for a while, intent on the business I had in hand, with my back turned toward the sea, when a youth who, as I saw subsequently, had leaped from a bark, dashed rudely against me, being driven to do so by the force of the leap. *When I angrily turned round and complained* of the injury I had received, conjuring him to tell me, in the name of the immortal gods, why he treated me so roughly, he entreated my pardon and made the very humblest excuses. Then I examined him carefully, and both his face and his attire told me that he came from the country of thy Panfilo. I at once determined to question him upon the matter:

"'Tell me, young man,' I said, 'and so may God be gracious to thee, if thou answerest truly, dost thou come from a faraway land?'

"'Yes, lady,' he replied.

"'Prithee, from what land,' I returned, 'if I may make so bold as to ask?'

"And he answered: 'From the land of Etruria do I come, and from its noblest city, wherein I was born.'

"When I heard this, I knew he belonged to the country of thy Panfilo, and I asked whether he was acquainted with him, and, if he was, to tell me what had become of him. He replied that he was very well acquainted with him, and, furthermore, he said that Pan-

filo would have come with him, had he not been detained by an unforeseen obstacle, but that he would be here in a few days without fail. In the mean time, while we were conversing in this wise, his companions also landed with their chattels and his, and he and they departed thence immediately. Thereupon I, forgetting every other affair, made my way hither, almost fearing that I should not live long enough to bring thee the news. And that is the reason why you have seen me in such a state of weariness and agitation. And now, I say again: be joyful and banish grief."

My heart leaped with delight at these words, and, taking her in my arms, I kissed her venerable brow. But a little after, being still doubtful, I made her repeat the tidings again and again, conjuring her to say whether she believed them true; yet at the same time fearful lest she might say they were not. Then, when she had sworn the most solemn oaths that everything she had told me was sooth, albeit my mind continued for a while to vacillate betwix a *yes* and a *no*, and now I believed, and now I believed not, yet at last I became so far convinced that I thanked the gods, in some such wise as follows:

"O Jove, best and greatest, supreme ruler of the heavens, and thou, O luminous Apollo, from whom nothing lies hidden, and thou, O gracious Venus, always compassionate of thy subjects, and thou, O holy boy who bearest the precious dart, be ye all praised forever! Verily they who place their hopes in ye cannot perish eternally! Lo, by your grace, and not by any merit of mine, Panfilo returns. I promise not to see him before I have honored your altars with most acceptable and precious incense—those altars before which I have hitherto uttered my most fervent prayers, and which I have bathed with my most bitter tears. And to thee, O Fortune, who hast at length taken pity on my woful case,

I solemnly vow that I shall at once erect the image I had promised thee as a gift. I beseech ye all, most humbly and most devoutly, to complete your benignant favors by removing every impediment that might hinder the speedy return of my Panfilo, and to lead him hither, safe and well, and such as he was wont to be."

No sooner was my prayer ended than I felt like the falcon released from the hood. I clapped my hands, and thus continued:

"O amorous heart, long weakened by misfortune, lay aside thine anxious cares forever, seeing that my beloved Panfilo has remembered me at last, and is returning, as he promised. Banish grief and fear and harmful shame, the fruitful cause of pangs innumerable; nor let thought of how Fortune has hitherto afflicted thee visit thee now; nay rather, chase away the gloomy mists of the cruel Fates, and let no memory of the wretched past disturb thee; turn a gladsome face to the joyous present, and let the former Fiammetta be clothed with a new mind, as with a new garment."

After saying these pleasant words, I broke off, for my soul had again become uncertain, and was, for some reason or other, I know not what, seized with a sudden icy chill. My will weakened in its resolution to be blithe and merry, and I, feeling, as it were, dazed, was unable to finish the words I desired to utter. *Oimè!* I was suffering from that calamity which always waits on the miserable: when a change in their condition occurs for the better, they cannot bring themselves to believe in it. When Fortune, therefore, becomes propitious to the afflicted, it usually betides that they are too weary to rejoice, and, as they believe that what they see is only a dream, they are afraid to trust to it. So I, almost bewildered, exclaimed:

"Who is it that revokes or forbids the pleasure I was beginning to feel? Is not my Panfilo returning? Cer-

tainly he is. Who, then, is it that commands me to weep? In no direction do I witness any occasion for melancholy. Who is it, therefore, that forbids me to adorn myself with new flowers and with rich robes? *Oimè!* I know not! Why is it that I know not? I only know that this is forbidden me; but why or by whom, I know not."

And being almost beside myself, and not willing that the tears that surged to mine eyes should fall therefrom, yet could I not keep them back, and, in the midst of my words, I broke out weeping; and so my long afflicted breast could not contain within itself the tears I had grown into the habit of constantly shedding. My mind, as if prophetic of the future, sent forth those open signs of that which was destined to happen in the future, just as mariners are sure that a terrific storm impends from the swelling of the waves around them, although the weather be calm. Then, being eager to get the better of that which my heart refused to accept, I said:

"Wretched woman that thou art, what forebodings are these? What baleful mishaps dost thou imagine are about to betide thee, although there be no cause for such imagining? On the contrary, lend a believing mind and a credulous ear to the happiness which may betide thee! Whatever may happen, why fear it before it comes? What does it profit thee to anticipate misfortune?"

Influenced by such arguments, I began to reassume the cheerfulness I had felt before, and, as well as I could, I chased away gloomy thoughts from my mind; and, being urged thereunto by my aged nurse, who was sure of the return of my lover, I changed my poor raiment for gay apparel, and began to devote much care to my person, so that, after his arrival, I might not frighten him away again by my wretched appearance. My pale complexion gradually took on its former brilliant color-



ing, and the plumpness that once rounded my form was, after a time, renewed, and I ceased to weep, albeit the purple circles that had formerly surrounded mine eyes did not vanish with my tears. Still mine eyes lost their glassy dulness, and the full light that erstwhile had made them glorious was seen in them again. My cheeks, which had been roughened by the oceans of tears I had shed, grew smooth and soft, and my hair, although it did not all at once resume its golden sheen, when properly cared for, showed some remnants of its pristine beauty. Furthermore, my beloved and splendid, yet long abandoned, costumes enhanced whatever charms were left me. What need of saying more? In short, I so amended myself and everything belonging to me, and was so nearly restored to my early beauty and estate, that the ladies in my neighborhood, and my kindred, and, especially, my dear husband, marveled greatly thereat; and they all said some such words as these in their own minds:

"What celestial influence can have thus emancipated this lady from the long sadness and despondency from which all our prayers and all our efforts and all our consolations have hitherto been unavailing to rescue her! In good sooth, this is a wonder there is no accounting for!"

Yet, albeit they marveled greatly, they were greatly delighted. So, too, my palace, long the abode of sorrow, because of my sorrow, became gay and lively, in sympathy with my gayety and liveliness. Thus, my heart being changed, all things, seemingly, changed too, and joyfulness took the place of dejectedness. But yet the days appeared to me to be very long because of my expectancy of Panfilo's return, whereof I now entertained such buoyant hopes. Thinking of my past sorrows and of the thoughts to which these hopes gave birth, I frequently condemned myself severely for having

entertained such calumnious ideas about my lover, saying:

"O what shameful things I have hitherto thought of my dear lover, and how unreasonably have I condemned him for his delay! How foolish it was of me to say that at any time he had belonged to another woman, and was not mine! Accursed be the liars who told me so! O ye gods, how can men tell such falsehoods and yet look as if nothing but truth could escape their lips? But surely I should have examined everything that was said more prudently and cautiously than I have done. I should have weighed the faith of my lover, which he had so often vowed to keep, with so many affectionate words, and with such an outpouring of tears, and with the proofs of love which he bore me then, and bears me now, against the words of those who, unpledged by oath, and without having investigated that whereof they spoke so confidently, adduced their own baseless and shallow opinions as authentic evidence of their statements. And that this is so must be manifest to all who care to study the facts. One person has seen a new bride entering Panfilo's house, and jumps to the conclusion that she belongs to the young man, being unaware of the amorous propensities of old men, and speaks of this woman as being the spouse of my Panfilo, thereby giving evident proof of his little concern for the anguish such a report must cause me! Another, because he has observed him in conversation with some lady, and has bantered him on his new acquaintance, who, haply, may have been a near relative, or, perchance, a virtuous servant, believed her to be his, and carelessly reported to others that such was the case. Oh, if I had only reflected on these things with judicious discernment, what tears, what sighs, what anguish I should have been spared! But have lovers ever been able to act with propriety or common sense? We are

all the sport of the emotions of the moment, and our minds move in accord with its sudden caprices. Lovers believe everything, since they are ever anxiously on the lookout for disappointment, and ever fearful of the future. Being constantly exposed to perilous accidents, they are always ready to accept them as natural and to be expected. Much as they desire a happy issue for their hopes, yet they always fear that matters may turn out unpropitious to their aspirations, and have only a weak confidence in their good fortune. But I should find some excuse from the fact that I have always entreated the gods to enable me to disguise and hide from others my ardent love. And lo, my prayers have been heard. He will not know all the foolish things I have done, and should he know them, what can he say except this: *She must have loved me very ardently to do such things?*

"It should even be a gratification to him to hear of my anguish and of the danger I have encountered, since they were the surest proofs of my fidelity to him. Indeed, I am inclined to believe that one of the reasons for his long absence was to try me, to see whether I could wait for him with a firm and constant mind, and never think of changing him for another. Well, he can see now that I have waited for him with a firm and constant mind. Then, when he has discovered the misery in which I abided during this long waiting, and the tears that I was constantly shedding, surely a love not different from the old one must inflame his heart. O God! when shall I see him, and when will he see me? How can I curb my eager longing to kiss him, no matter who is present, when I first behold him? Certainly I hardly believe that I can. When shall I be able, holding him strained to my breast, to return those kisses, which at his parting he showered on my inanimate face, and which it was not then in my power to return? Certainly the augury which I forecasted from the circum-

stance that he was unable to bid me farewell has proved to be a true augury, portending, as it did, his future return. When shall the hour come when I may tell him of all my anguish, of all my tears, and hear from his own lips the cause of his long absence? Shall I live until then? I can hardly believe it: Ah, may that day come speedily, for Death, whom I had formerly not only summoned but sought, now appals me. If it be possible that any prayer of mine may reach his ears, I beseech him to keep away from me, and allow me and my Panfilo to pass the rest of our youthful years in content and happiness."

I was anxious that no day should elapse during which I should not hear some tidings of the approaching return of my Panfilo. Frequently did my old nurse use her best efforts to discover again the herald of the joyful news, so that she might be more assured of the certainty of what she had told me; and she became still more eager in her search for him, when the time appointed for his return drew near. I not only looked forward expectantly to the promised arrival of my lover, but, anticipating it, I imagined it possible that he had already come. Every moment during the entire day was I running now to a window, now to a door, hurrying to and fro, in this direction and in that, gazing at the long highway in hopes that I might see him wending his way to my dwelling. Every man I saw journeying on the road I fancied to be Panfilo; and I awaited the approach of such a man with uncontrollable eagerness. Then, when he was close to me and I recognized that it was not he, great was my confusion. Others whom I saw at a distance kept me in much suspense, for as this or that one went on his way I could not tell but he might be my Panfilo. Sometimes, if, haply, I had to attend to household affairs, or, for some reason or other, had to go into the city, a thousand thoughts stung my soul, as an infinite number of dogs might have bitten my body, each thought saying:

"Haply he has passed just now, or he passed while thou wert not looking. Return!"

So I returned, and went through the same round again, doing little else except run from the window to the door and from the door to the window. Wretched me! what wearisome toil was mine, watching and waiting for what was never to happen! When at last came the day which my nurse had told me would surely be the day of his arrival, I, in imitation of Alcmena, when she heard that Amphitryon was approaching, arrayed myself in my finest apparel, wore my most precious ornaments, and, with dextrous hand, left nothing undone that might enhance the beauty of every part of my person. I was hardly able to restrain myself from rushing to the shore of the bay, so that I might obtain a sight of him at the earliest possible moment, for he would surely, as my nurse had informed me, be on one of the galleys which were to enter the harbor at that particular time. But, when I reflected that the very first thing he would be certain to do was to come to see me, I curbed my desire, albeit fain to gratify it. As he did not come on the day I imagined he had landed, I began to marvel exceedingly; and, notwithstanding all my hopeful cheerfulness, various doubts arose in my mind which my high spirits were unable to suppress entirely. So, after a little time, I again asked my old nurse what had become of him, and whether he had really arrived or not. She went out to make inquiries, but with such a slow and hesitating gait—or what appeared to me to be such—that I frequently imprecated curses on this tardy old age of hers. After a time spent in making the inquiries to which I have alluded, she returned one day with a very mournful countenance and with a gait slower than ever. *Oimè!* as soon as I fixed my eyes upon her, hardly any life was left in my melancholy bosom; straightway it flashed across my mind that my lover had died on the road, or

had fallen sick on his arrival. In a moment my face changed from red to pale and from pale to red. Advancing toward the slow old woman, I said:

"Speak quickly. What tidings bringest thou? Is my lover alive?"

She did not move, she did not utter a word, but, sinking into a chair, she kept her eyes riveted on my countenance. I, all trembling, like some new leaf fluttering in the wind, keeping back my tears, but only by an immense effort, pressed my hands to my breast to still the beatings of my heart, and said:

"Unless thou speakest quickly, and it would seem from thy gloomy air that thou art resolved not to do so, I will tear to rags every part of the apparel I am now wearing! What reason canst thou have for remaining silent, if not a wicked one? No longer try to hide thy news. Out with it; it cannot be worse than that which I imagine. Is my Panfilo living?"

Stung by my words, she answered, in a humble voice, keeping her eyes on the ground the while:

"He is living."

"Well, then," I returned, "why dost thou not tell me at once what accident has befallen him? Why holdest thou me in suspense, fancying a thousand divers disasters? Has he been attacked by a sudden fit of illness? What kept him from coming to see me as soon as he had landed from the galley?"

"I am not aware," she replied, "that he has been the victim of any accident, or of any illness, either."

"Therefore," said I, "thou hast not seen Panfilo, and, perchance he has not come?"

Thereupon she answered:

"Verily, I have seen him, and he has come, but he is not the person we both expected"

To which I replied:

"Prithee, who informed thee that he who has come is

not the person we expected? Didst thou look at him carefully before, and hast thou examined attentively his features lately?"

"Verily," said she, "I never have seen thy lover so closely that I should know him again. But, now being introduced to the man, who bore the same name as thy Panfilo, by the youth who had first spoken to me of his return, I said that I had frequently made inquiries about him, as I wished to speak to him. He thereupon requested me to tell him what I wished to know about him; to which I made answer that I wished to learn of his health. I also requested him to tell me how his aged father was, and in what position he was in other respects. Then I begged him to acquaint me with his reasons for his long absence. He answered that he had not known his father inasmuch as he was a posthumous child, and that, thanks to the favoring gods, all his affairs had had a prosperous issue. He had never been here before, and now he was resolved to stay here for as short a time as possible. At all this I marveled exceedingly; and doubting whether he was not making a mock of me, I asked him to tell me his name. He straightforwardly made me acquainted with the same, and, no sooner had I heard it than I quickly perceived that, because of its resemblance to the name of thy lover, we had both been deceived."

As soon as I heard these words the light fled from mine eyes. Every sensation was deadened, and, as I sank in a heap at the foot of the stairs I was about to ascend, the only strength that remained in my body merely sufficed to enable me to utter one sigh. The wretched old woman and the other attendants whom she had summoned with loud cries, bore me to my chamber, and laid me on my luckless couch, fearing that I might be dead. Then, sprinkling cold water upon me, they at length brought back the wandering soul to its tenement, albeit some for a long space were inclined to believe that

I could not live, while others were sure that, with care, I might revive.

After much suffering, and many tears and sighs, I asked my unhappy nurse if what she had told me was really true. Moreover, remembering how cautious Panfilo was wont to be, and suspecting that he might have wished to conceal his identity from the nurse with whom he had never previously spoken, I insisted on her giving me a particular description of the features of that Panfilo with whom she had conversed. And she, first taking a solemn oath that everything was as she declared it to be, depicted in due order the lineaments, the stature, the fashion of the limbs, and, especially, that of the countenance and of the dress of him whom she had taken for Panfilo. This she did so convincingly that I had to give entire faith to her narrative, and believe that things were so as she declared them to be. Thus, all hope being banished from my heart, I became as desperate and forlorn as I had been before. Rising furiously, I pulled off the gay attire wherewith I had just adorned myself; my precious jewels I laid aside; and my smoothly arranged hair I disheveled with mine own hands. Then, weeping bitterly, and feeling that now I was bereft of all consolation, I began to bewail, in harsh words, the hopes that had proved false and the mistaken delusions I had entertained with regard to my treacherous lover. In short, I felt that all my hopes were crushed, and I became as despondent as ever I had been since first Panfilo had forsaken me. I longed for death with a more fervent yearning that I had ever felt before. Nor should I have avoided it, as I had lately done, were it not that the expectation of the journey in some sort restrained me.



## CHAPTER VIII

*Wherein Madonna Fiammetta, after comparing her own misfortunes with those of many ladies of ancient times, shows that hers are greater, and then brings to a close her lamentations*

**T**HE sort of life which I now led, O compassionate ladies, you can form some idea of from what you have already heard. And, the more Love, my ungrateful lord, was convinced that all hope had fled from me, the more he wrought additional ill unto me, and the more he rejoiced in adding fresh fuel to the fire that burned me, so that the flames of my unhappy passion now raged more furiously than ever. And as they increased, so did my pangs increase with them. Nothing that I could do to alleviate them succeeded. They became more baleful from hour to hour, and pressed more heavily on my tortured soul. Nor do I doubt that had I let them follow their natural course, they would have opened a pathway to that seemly death for which I had formerly yearned so strongly. But, as I have said, I still entertained the firm conviction that I should see again him who was the cause of all my woes, relying as I did on the future journey in which my dear husband had promised to accompany me. I did not try, indeed, to lessen my sorrows, but rather to endure them: One means only occurred to my mind of achieving the latter, albeit I had given deep consideration to several other plans for attaining this object, and that was to compare my afflictions with those that had been visited on so many ill-fated ladies in the past. Now two advantages accrued to me from this resolution of mine. One was that I could discern plainly, as my nurse had said with a view of consoling me, that I was by no means

the first to suffer from such calamities. The second was that, after making a due comparison, I was enabled to perceive that my misfortunes transcended those of all other ladies to an almost incredible degree. And this I considered to redound exceedingly to my glory, since I could truthfully say that I had sustained more cruel mis-haps than had ever been sustained by any woman before me, and yet lived! I have spent the time until now in dolefully contemplating this glory, the consequence of my supreme misery, in such wise as you are about to hear

In measuring my sorrows with the sorrows of others, I first bethought me of the daughter of Inachus, whom I have always imagined to have been a most delicate and voluptuous damsel, and to have been for a little while supremely happy, feeling that she was beloved of yore: and, in sooth, any lady would feel most joyful at the idea of being loved by so great a god, since no greater good could fall to her lot than this, whereof there can be no doubt. When she was afterward transformed into a heifer, and delivered over to Argus by Juno to be strictly watched, I am quite sure the pangs she endured were exceedingly harrowing. Certainly, I should be inclined to conclude that her woes were greater than mine, only that her divine lover was constantly at hand to protect her. Who for a moment can suppose that, if I had had my lover near me to aid me in bearing up against disaster, I should have considered any misfortune too heavy to endure? Moreover, her sorrows had such a fair ending that her past miseries must have seemed to her of little account; for, after the slaying of Argus, she was transported to Egypt, restored to her first form, and married to Osiris. Thus, all her troubles having vanished, she saw herself at last a most splendid and happy queen. Certainly if I were sure of the companionship of Panfilo, even though it were in my old age, I would re-

gard my past torments as trivial when compared with my present joys, just as this lady did. But God alone knows whether this will ever be, or whether I am not again deceiving myself with false hopes!

Very close to the love of Io I have been inclined to set the love of the doomed and luckless Byblis, who forsook everything to follow stern Caunus. And I think I may place in the same category Myrrha, who, after the indulgence of her unlawful passion, had to fly from her enraged father, being menaced by him with death, and was transformed into a myrtle.

Reflecting within mine own mind on the anguish that each must have suffered, I am well able to discern that it was exceeding great, albeit, perchance, deserved, for their loves were most abominable. But, after careful consideration, I perceive that their woes did not last long and were soon over; for the gods were propitious to the appeal of Myrrha, changing her at once into the tree which bears her name. Nor did she feel any further pain, albeit the aforesaid tree, as I have learned, immediately began to shed tears, as soon as she took its form, and sheds them still. Byblis, too, at least according to one report, got rid of her anguish by means of a halter; although another author (with whom I am inclined to agree) tells us that she was changed into the fountain that still bears her name, through the kindness of the nymphs, who took pity on her lamentable case. Am I not right then, in asserting that my punishment is much severer than that of those ladies, inasmuch as, however deplorable theirs may have been, it lasted but a short time, while mine has been prolonged beyond measure?

After I had duly meditated on the disastrous end of these lovers, came to me the remembrance of the piteous fate of the luckless Pyramus and his Thisbe, for whom I have always felt no small compassion, they were both so young and they had loved each other so fondly! I pitied

them also because the effort to gratify fully their love became the occasion of their destruction. Oh, how woful must have been the despairing agony of that youth when, during the silent night, he reached that white mulberry-tree beside the cool fountain and beheld the veil of his *Thisbe* tossed and rent by the blood-stained jaws of the wild beast—a circumstance which naturally led him to believe the maiden to have been devoured by lions! He showed what his pangs must have been by slaying himself immediately afterward. Then I revolved within my breast what must have been the thoughts of the hapless *Thisbe* when she stole cautiously forth, and perceived her lover all covered with blood and struggling in the agonies of death! Yet, albeit I feel how agonizing were the tears and how burning were the thoughts of these two lovers, their sufferings were less than mine, since they were ended almost as soon as they were begun. Oh, how blest must be their souls, if they love each other in the next life as fondly as they loved in this! No tortures endured by them here below can be viewed as of any importance, if balanced against the delights of this eternal companionship!

Came to me next, with greater force than even the sorrows of the others, the grief of forsaken *Dido*, because meseemed it bore a closer likeness to mine own than the combined sorrows of all the rest. I saw her, with my very eyes, building *Carthage* and, with stately ceremonial, giving laws to her people in the Temple of *Juno*. I saw her receiving the shipwrecked *Æneas* with kindness and hospitality; I saw how she grew daily more and more infatuated with his beauty, and how she was willing to entrust herself and all her power to the custody of the Trojan leader, who, after he had won her tenderest favors, deserted her and fled, albeit he perceived that her passion for him had become uncontrollable. Oh, how unparalleled must have been her misery when she gazed

her after she wrought this evil; but sure I am that if I had ever committed such a shameful deed, nothing but a violent death could purify me from such foulness. Yet, if she herself survived, she may have easily found consolation in that forgetfulness of which I have already spoken, for the dead are wont to be speedily buried in oblivion. To the grief which she may have suffered I would add that of many others, who were again consoled, either by death or necessary forgetfulness. What is the effect of fire and molten metals on those who suddenly dip a finger in them, and as suddenly withdraw it? I believe the effect to be painful, beyond a doubt. But it is nothing in comparison with the agony they would feel who had the whole body plunged in fire or molten metals, and that, too, for a very long space of time. Therefore, great as were the afflictions suffered by these ladies, which I have described, they were slight if placed side by side with those which I have endured and am enduring continually.

Such, then, have been the disasters brought about by amorous troubles. Yet there are other calamities that move me to weep even more unrestrainedly than do these, for the baleful and unforeseen assaults which Fortune has made on those who were once in the enjoyment of supremest happiness and then suddenly plunged into extremest unhappiness, are surely calculated to arouse especial compassion. Such have been the frightful catastrophes which befell Jocasta, Hecuba, Sophonisba, Cornelia and Cleopatra. Oh, how great was the misery that beset the close of the days of Jocasta, we shall at once perceive, if we but investigate the matter duly—a misery so horrifying in its consequences that it might well drive to madness the firmest mind! She, having been married in her youth to Laius, the Theban King, agreed to let her husband expose her first offspring to be devoured by wild beasts, the miserable father think-

ing that thus he should avoid the fate which the gods in their implacable course had ordained! Oh, what anguish must we not imagine to have been hers who consented to such a sacrifice, if we but consider her rank and condition! She, being afterward informed by the herdsman to whom her child had been committed, that he had done as he had been commanded, had no reason to repute that child as other than dead. After a certain number of years had elapsed, her husband was miserably slain by the youth himself to whom she had given birth, and she afterward became the spouse of her unknown son, and by him had four children! Thus, one and the same moment saw her the mother and the wife of her parricidal son! Afterward, when too late, he discovered his double crime, and depriving himself both of his eyes and of his kingdom, he made his guilt manifest to everyone. But what must have been the state of her mind, at a time, too, when she was advanced in years, and her condition demanded repose rather than anguish? We may well imagine it to have been most lamentable. Yet Fortune did not even then pardon her; she rather added further woes unto her misery. Jocasta saw her two sons agree to share the kingdom between them and reign alternately year by year; she saw one of her sons refusing to surrender the kingdom to the other when it was the turn of the latter to rule; she saw her city besieged by a great part of Greece under seven kings; and, at last, she saw her two sons dying by each other's hand, after numerous battles and conflagrations; she saw a new sovereignty in Thebes, and her husband-son banished; she saw the walls of that ancient city which were built of stones that moved to the sound of Amphion's lyre crumble to the dust and her kingdom perish. Then she hanged herself and abandoned her two daughters to a most wretched destiny. What more could the gods, the world, and Fortune do to her? Though all hell were ex-

plored, I do not believe there could be found within its borders such unutterable agony as must have been hers. As she had had experience of every sort of guilt, so had she of every sort of anguish. Certainly everyone will be inclined to regard her wretchedness as far greater than mine. And I should adopt this opinion also, were it not that love, at least, was not added to her other miseries. Moreover, who doubts that, inasmuch as she was well aware that she herself, her house, and her husband had all provoked the wrath of the gods, she must have known also that her punishment was merited? Certainly there is no one who would regard her as a wise and discreet woman. Furthermore, if she was out of her senses, she was likely to be unconscious of her misfortunes, and so, as she was unconscious of them, they did not particularly grieve her. Besides, even supposing she were conscious of them, we know that those who believe they have deserved the evils which they have to bear, support such evils with little or no discomfort. But I have never committed any offense that should justly excite the gods to wreak their vengeance on me. On the contrary I have constantly honored them, and have sought their favor by offering victims at their altars; nor have I ever scorned them, as the Thebans were wont to do. Oh, I know that someone will say:

"How dare you assert that you never have merited any punishment and that you never have sinned? Have you not broken the most sacred laws and by adultery violated your nuptial vows?" Certainly I have. But if the matter be weighed carefully, it will be discovered that that is the sole fault that can be found in me, and that it does not at all merit such a punishment as that which I have had to endure. It is not at all a matter of astonishment that I in my tender youth should not have been able to resist that which neither gods nor the strongest men have been able to resist. And in this I

am not the first, nor shall I be the last, nor am I the only one. In this I have companions everywhere, and the laws which I have violated are inclined to deal mildly with such violation when an entire multitude of people combine to violate them. Moreover, my fault has been most carefully concealed; a circumstance that should be partly effective in saving me from punishment. And over and above all this, supposing that the gods should be angry with me and desire to wreak their vengeance on me for my fault, would it not be only common justice that they should first wreak their vengeance on him who has been the occasion of my sin? I do not wit very well who, in good sooth, has led me to break those holy laws, whether Love or Panfilo, because of the beauty of his form. Whichsoever of them it might be, he was certainly gifted with extraordinary power for tormenting me to an extreme degree. Therefore this did not befall me on account of any sin I had committed. If, indeed, it was the gods who visited me with such infinite punishment for such a fault, they would be acting against their righteous judgment and their usual custom, for they would not be making the punishment to fit the sin, but rather inflicting a punishment that was beyond measure greater than the sin.

Whoever compares the sin of Jocasta and its punishment with my sin and its punishment, will surely come to the conclusion that her punishment was very light, and that mine will be notorious for its excessive severity. And let not any lady cling to a different opinion, saying: "She lost her kingdom, her sons, and, finally, her life, while this lady lost only her lover."

Certainly, I confess that all this is true. But, then, my fortunes were so bound up with this lover that when he forsook me all happiness forsook me as well. For everything that seemed to render me happy in the eyes of men was to me, on the contrary, a source of misery and



not of happiness; seeing that my husband, kinsfolk, wealth, and other such things were all an exceedingly heavy weight on my spirits and the direct opposite to that for which I yearned. If my lover, as soon as he carried me off, had carried off all these things, there would yet remain to me a most open way to the satisfaction of my desire, and, if there were not, a thousand different modes of dying would have presented themselves to my mind, any one of which I could employ to end my woes. Therefore, I have proved that my punishment has been much more grievous than that of any of the afore-mentioned ladies, and this opinion of mine is based on sound judgment

Then came to my mind Hecuba, and meseemed that her fate, too, was dolorous beyond measure. It was her ill-starred destiny to behold the ruined and most lamentable remains of a great kingdom; to behold an illustrious city become the abode of wretchedness; to behold a noble spouse slaughtered before her eyes, and many fair sons, and beautiful daughters, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, all slain or taken captive; and to witness great wealth destroyed, and grandeur vanishing, and allied kings cut to pieces, and other cruel deeds, and her scattered people, and the falling temples, and the fugitive gods! How often must she have recalled to her tortured mind in her old age the mighty Hector, and Troilus, and Deiphobus, and Polydorus, and many others of her brave sons! And what anguish must have been hers when she brooded over their fate, recollecting that she had seen them all die, that she had witnessed the blood of her husband bespattering her very bosom, had looked on while Troy, filled with lofty palaces and with a noble people, was being burned with Grecian fire and all leveled with the ground! Her daughter Polyxene was cruelly slaughtered by Pyrrhus on the tomb of his father! Oh, what a bleeding heart must she not be

thought to have had when she surveyed all this! Certainly I am quite convinced her agony was extreme. Ay, but then it was brief. Her feeble and aged spirit, unable to endure such scenes, became disordered, and madness seized her, as might be plainly discerned from the fact that she coursed across the fields, barking like a dog. But I, on the contrary, have a firm and retentive memory, and, to my great misfortune, am in full possession of my judgment (*omnè!* would that I were not!), and so I can plainly discriminate between the causes of my disastrous condition. Now, in my judgment, an affliction that continues for a very long period, no matter how light that affliction may seem to be, is much more grievous—and this I have often said already—than any affliction, however heavy, which ends and is over in a short time; this I know to be true beyond any doubt.

Sophonisba, dazed between the gloom of her widowhood and the gayety of her nuptials, found herself at one and the same moment in sorrow and in joy, at once prisoner and spouse, despoiled of a kingdom and winning a kingdom, and yet withal, in a brief time, compelled to quaff the cup of poison sent her by her second husband. In sooth, she has always appeared to me to have had her full share of anguish. She saw herself at first a most glorious Numidian queen; then when the prospects of her kindred turned out disastrous, she saw her husband, Syphax, a captive in the hands of Masinissa, and, immediately after she had lost her royal state, behold that king at once restored it by making her his wife! Oh, how indignant must her soul have been as she gazed on these mutations of destiny! What changes must she not have imagined that fickle Fortune had still in store for her when she celebrated that new marriage with a sad heart, not being at all sure of the future! And lo! a day had scarcely elapsed after her espousals, when, before she had time to become as habituated to the new

love of Masinissa as she had been to the old love of Syphax, she received the fatal draught from a servant sent by her second spouse, and, first uttering a few scornful words, fearlessly drank it, breathing her last sigh after a few moments! How bitter would have been her sufferings if she had been allowed time to meditate upon them! But she was not: she had very little time given her for grieving. Now, if it be but considered that death came to her almost immediately and cut short her sadness, it must be admitted that her lot was far happier than mine, seeing that death has refused to come to me, albeit I have suffered such a length of time, and still refuses to come near me, and will continue to refuse to come near me, eagerly as I desire it, with the evident intent of protracting my sufferings.

Melancholy as was the case of Sophonisba, Cornelia seems to me to have approached her in misfortune. She had attained to a position of great dignity and splendor, being first the wife of Crassus and then of Pompey the Great, who by his surpassing worth had almost acquired the supreme governance of Rome. But, Fortune having changed her destiny, she had to fly, with her husband, first from Rome, then from all Italy, closely pursued by Cæsar; her wanderings involved her in many calamities. Finally he left her in Lesbos, and there she received him after that defeat in Thessaly wherein all his forces were utterly shattered by his adversary. Yet he, still in hopes of restoring his power with the aid of the conquered East, arrived in Egypt, after plowing the deep, and sought the help of its youthful King, who owed the kingdom to his kindness. And there his hapless spouse beheld his headless trunk tossed by the waves of the sea on the strand. All these things combined and all these things singly we must imagine to have afflicted her bitterly. But the sound advice of Cato of Utica, and the impossibility of ever having her Pompey with her again,

in a short time greatly mitigated her grief. I, on the contrary, filled with vain hopes which I am unable to banish from my breast, do nothing but continue to weep, without counsel of comfort, save what I may, haply, receive from my old nurse, who is conscious of my miseries. Her I now know to be more faithful than wise, for often when she fancies she is proposing a remedy for my misfortunes, she is really doing her best to add to my wretchedness

There are many who may be inclined to believe that Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, suffered a greater punishment than mine, and that, indeed, her anguish must have been insupportable, especially when, after reigning in the enjoyment of ample power and wealth, she was deprived of these and shut up in prison by her brother. Such a calamitous downfall must certainly have occasioned her excessive grief. But her confident hope of that which eventually happened, no doubt helped her to bear up easily under that grief. Afterward, when she was liberated from her prison and became the mistress of Cæsar for a while, and was then forsaken by him, there are those who think that her affliction at being so unworthily treated must have been exceeding bitter. But those who think thus forget that there was no steady affection in either to hinder them from growing tired of each other, and that she had no difficulty in withdrawing her love from one and giving it to another, as, indeed, she often afterward showed she was able to do with great facility. But God forbid that that sort of consolation should ever happen to me! There never has existed, and there never shall exist, a man who could say or who can say that I have belonged or belong now, to anyone, save and except Panfilo alone; for him I live and for him I will live; nor do I expect that any other love shall ever have strength to efface the love I have for him from my heart. Furthermore, even if she were disconsolate for a time at

her parting from Cæsar, they are mistaken who imagine that such sadness was likely to be lasting. Though she might have grieved at the moment he left her, yet there was in her heart a joy that far outstripped her grief and consoled her for her sorrow: she had a son by him and she had also her kingdom restored to her by him. Such joy as hers was amply sufficient to compensate a woman like her, whose love was so fleeting and unsteady, for greater evils than those which she suffered; and that her love was of that sort, I think I have already suggested. It was not her love for Cæsar, but her marriage with Antony that brought her her most poignant and heart-rending misery. Him she spurred on by her blandishments and flatteries to engage in civil war with his brother-in-law. Apparently she hoped, in case he were victorious, that she might aspire to the governance of the Roman Empire. When, however, she was deprived of that hope and was also, at the same time, bereft of her husband by death, then I can readily believe that she was afflicted almost beyond what any other lady had ever been. And certainly, considering that her aspiration was so noble and lofty, to have missed it simply because of the vicissitudes of an unlucky battle, must have been to her exceeding painful, seeing that, if the battle had been won, she would have become mistress and lady of the whole round world; and, in addition to this, she lost a husband to whom she had become passionately devoted. But for her forlorn condition she speedily found the sole medicine that could relieve such pain as hers, that is, death, which, although a harsh antidote, did not make her suffer long, inasmuch as two asps, in a brief space of time, were able to suck from her breasts both her blood and her life. Oh, how often would I, whose anguish is at least as great as ever was hers, even were I to admit that I had less cause for it, have gladly acted exactly as she acted in seeking death, had I been

permitted to do so, or had the dread of future infamy not held me back!

After meditating on the fatal doom of Cleopatra and of the afore-mentioned ladies, I reflected on the calamities that befell many men and kingdoms of great renown. I thought of the funeral pyre of Cræsus, of Cyrus and the wealthy realm of Persia, of the magnificence of Pyrrhus, of the power of Darius, of the cruelty of Jugurtha, of the tyranny of Dionysius, of the arrogance of Agamemnon, and of many other things withal. Though these were the victims of misfortunes similar to those already described, yet were they not subjected to them for so long a period as to feel the full weight of the heavy afflictions that visited them, as I do. While I was recounting to myself all the woes that many of olden times were doomed to suffer, in what manner ye have heard, and while I was searching in my mind for such lamentable examples of wretchedness as might comfort me by showing that I had companions in my misery, and so should give way less to despair, there came to me the recollection of Thyestes and of Tereus, who were both the hideous sepulchers of their own offspring! In very sooth, I cannot understand how they could be restrained from opening their own bodies with sharp-edged knives, and releasing from the paternal bowels their struggling children, who must have longed to get out, abominating, as they surely did, the place into which they had been forced to enter, and fearing still the cruel teeth that bit them, and not seeing how otherwise they were to escape such biting! But yet Thyestes and Tereus vented their anger as best they could on those who set before them such banquets, and they were besides regarded with great pity by their subjects; and they also must have felt that in this they were without blame; which has by no means happened to me. Everyone compassionates me for that wherein I do not want their compassion,

nor do I dare to reveal unto them that for which I need compassion, namely the real cause of my grief. If I could venture to do so, I do not doubt that, just as some remedy was found for the grief of the others, so a similar remedy might be found for mine.

Came to my mind next the bitter tears shed by Lycurgus, as well as by all his house, when he learned that his son lay dead within the coils of the snake; also those of Atalanta, mother of Parthenopæus, as she bewailed her son, who had died on the Theban plain. Such sorrows touched me very nearly, and I had as deep a perception of them and experienced as profound sympathy with them as if they had affected myself. They are all so woful that it is impossible to imagine how their anguish could be exceeded; at least such is my opinion. And yet so much glory have those who had to endure these calamities gained forever and ever that their sorrows should almost be considered joys. The splendid obsequies which the seven kings performed around the remains of the child, and the grand athletic contests and games that followed were well calculated to alleviate the grief and anger of his parents; so, too, the noble life and victorious death of her son must have consoled Atalanta for his fall. But to me nothing has ever happened that could for a moment divert my attention from my anguish. If any such thing had happened to me, I who now call myself, and, haply, am, the most unfortunate of women, would, perhaps, have felt inclined to affirm the opposite.

I have also contemplated the various deeds and divers wanderings of Ulysses, and I have perceived clearly that his wearisome journeys by land and sea, his mortal perils, and his excessive disasters could not have befallen him without causing him very great agony of soul. But, after repeatedly inquiring into the nature of the agony which I suffer, I cannot avoid inferring that it is much more grievous than his. Do ye listen and I will tell the

reason why. In the first place, and over and above all, he was a man. Therefore, he had greater strength of endurance than have I, a tender young woman. He was vigorous and daring, always accustomed to dangers and afflictions, inured to them, as it were, and when he was exhausted, he could always enjoy a deep and restful sleep. I, on the other hand, having been reared with exceeding delicacy, and having been wont to toy in my chamber with wanton love, naturally felt every little annoyance to be distasteful and worrying. He indeed was harassed by Neptune and, after being driven from his course, was borne to many strange places, and was refused further assistance in his troubles by angry Æolus. But I am vexed by mischievous Love, the mighty lord who had aforetime plagued and conquered those who plagued Ulysses. Moreover, if deadly perils menaced him, he was always running to seek the same; and who has a right to grumble because he finds what he has sought? But I would gladly live in peace and tranquillity, if I could, and would have nothing to do with danger, unless it were thrust upon me. Furthermore, he had no fear of death, and therefore encountered it without reluctance. But I fear it greatly, albeit sometimes, being thereunto impelled by my miserable estate, I have rushed to embrace it. Again, he hoped eternal fame from his toils and perils. But I am apprehensive of disgrace and infamy, should my misfortunes happen to be discovered. So it is plain to be seen that his misfortunes were not worse than mine are; rather, in good sooth, is it evident that mine far outstrip his. In addition to all this, much more has been told of him than actually occurred, while the woes that have depressed me are so numberless that I should never have time to relate them all.

I will now proceed to make some slight mention of the sorrows that afflicted Hypsipyle, Medea, CEnone and Ariadne; these I feel must have been very grievous; and,



moreover, I judge their misadventures, and the pangs they suffered because of them, to bear a close likeness to mine own; seeing that each of these, being forsaken by her lover, just as I have been, poured forth showers of tears, heaved the bitterest sighs, and endured the heaviest kind of anguish, and all without avail. But, albeit they bewailed their fate, just as I have done and do, they at last beheld the end of their woes and had a just revenge for their tears. Now, no such requital have I had for my torments. Hypsipyle, although she had paid distinguished honor to Jason, and had been united to him by meet and binding laws, might well complain when she beheld him torn from her arms by Medea; just as I may, our cases being the same. But the providence of the gods which keeps a watchful and righteous eye on everything (save on the wrongs that I have endured!) gratified her with a sweet avengement, since she lived to see Medea, who had deprived her of Jason, abandoned by Jason for Creusa.

Certainly I do not say that all my unhappiness would vanish if I saw the same thing happen to her who has stolen away from me my Panfilò, unless I were the lady for whom he had forsaken her; but I do say that, in any case, such a turn of affairs would be a great comfort to me. Medea, too, must have taken much delight in her revenge, albeit she was as cruel to herself as she was to her ungrateful lover; for, not content with setting fire to the palace and burning the new loved one (as she ought to have been) she slew her own two children in the presence of their father. Cœnone, also, after a long period of mourning, had at length the satisfaction of seeing her disloyal and felon lover pay the well-merited penalty of the laws he had broken; she beheld the land of his birth miserably wasted by fire and sword, and all because of the woman he had preferred to her. It was no doubt a glorious revenge; yet surely I should prefer

to endure my sorrows, heavy as they are, to such a revenge as that in my case. Again, Ariadne saw from her station in heaven, after she had become the spouse of Bacchus, the furious passion of Phædra for her stepson; and it was Phædra who had abetted the desertion of Ariadne by Theseus, because she wished to be the wife of the Athenian herself.

Thus, having examined carefully the misfortunes that befell these, I find that I alone am the most miserable woman that ever has been in the world, seeing that I am preeminent above them all because of the length and intensity of the agonies I have had to suffer. But if, happily, O ladies, ye are disposed to hold my arguments as insensate and incoherent, and coming from an insensate and incoherent lover, and if you judge them altogether trivial and worthy of no consideration, esteeming the misfortunes of those of olden times to be far more harrowing than are mine, to convince you of the truth of what I say, it should be necessary for me to add only this one single proof to all the others. If they who envy are more miserable than those they envy, I am more miserable than all the aforementioned persons; for I am envious of the calamities that befell them, because I regard those calamities as much less distressing than the calamities which have befallen me.

You may perceive now, O ladies, how unfortunate I have been rendered by the immemorial deceptions of Fortune. Furthermore, just as the lamp which is nigh being quenched is wont to flare up for a moment and to cast a brighter flame than that which it shed before, so she has filled me from time to time with a sudden joy only to plunge me in deeper darkness afterward. Thus has she seemingly now and then bestowed on me some consolation; but it was with the plain intent to crush all my hopes and visit me with greater anguish later. Laying aside every other comparison, I will use my

best endeavors to convince you of the overwhelming nature of my new misfortunes by one single comparison only. That the tortures which I suffer at present are infinitely more severe than those I endured before that vain and passing outburst of rejoicing which I have described, will be made manifest to you if you but consider how much more fatal to the sick who have had a relapse are second fevers, coming upon them, as they do, with intermittent heat and cold, than were the first. And, to the end that I may not weary you with a too prolonged account of my woes, or force you to shed tears over-much, if, haply, any of you has wept, or weeps now, while reading the things I have set down here, also that I may not waste in words the time I need myself for cries and sobs, I have resolved to write nothing further. I have tried to make it clear to you that this narrative, most true though it be in all respects, no more represents what I actually feel withal, than does a painted fire represent a fire that really burns. Wherefore I humbly beseech God that, through your prayers or through mine, He send down His saving waters to quench that fire, either in the shape of a mournful death for me or of the welcome return of Panfilo.

## CHAPTER IX

*Wherein Madonna Fiammetta speaks to her book, telling it in what dress, and when, and to whom it ought to go, and from whom it ought to be kept, and makes an end*



MY dear little book, drawn as it were from the tomb of thy mistress, thou hast now come to thine end, which pleases me well, with far greater speed than have my wrongs. Just as thou art written by mine own hand, and, in great part, blotted with mine own tears, do thou at once present thyself to the eyes of enamored ladies. And, if pity be thy companion, as I most firmly hope it may be, they will read thee most willingly, unless Love has altered his laws since the time when I became miserable. Be not in any wise ashamed, albeit clad in the mean apparel wherewith I have covered thee, to go to each, however noble she be, provided she refuse not to receive thee. No one will require that thou have a grander dress, even if I had consented to give thee such a one. Thou thyself shouldst be well content to mark thus thy similitude to the woful life I lead, which life, being most wretched, causes thee to be most wretchedly vested, as it does me. Therefore, let not any ornamenting be a concern unto thee, as it is wont to be to happier books; thou must not desire to have noble bindings of various colors, garish with tinting and ornature, and rejoicing in smooth and polished edges, or in gay miniatures, or in illuminated lettering. Such things beseeem not the heavy sorrows which thou bearest with thee. Then, leave to more fortunate books all such devices, and also inks of divers brilliant hues, and paper rubbed with pumice-stone, and wide margins. For thee it is fitting to

make thy visits to whatever places I send thee in disordered and disheveled guise, blotted, stained, and squalid, and so arouse compassion for my woful estate in the hearts of those who may read thee. If thou behold signs of such compassion in the faces of lovely ladies, then requite them for the same as well as thou art able.

We are not—neither thou nor I—so depressed by fortune that we cannot render to ladies the greatest services. We can show forth many examples which ought to teach them, if they be happy, to set a limit to their desires and avoid becoming like unto us. Do thou prove to them—which thou canst easily do—that, however prudent they have been in their choice of lovers, they should always be on their guard against such disasters as have afflicted us and should, therefore, avoid the hidden snares laid for them by men. Go, then. I know not with what gait thou shouldst go, whether quick or slow; nor do I know how or by whom thou wilt be received. Still, proceed as Fortune directs thee. Thy course cannot be regulated to any great degree. From thee the clouded skies hide every star. Therefore murmur not if thou be tossed about hither and thither. Like unto a ship that has lost helm and sails, and must trust to the mercy of the waves, so do thou abandon thyself to fate, and do thou adopt various plans according to the nature of the places to which thou comest.

Shouldst thou haply reach the hands of one who is so much at ease in her loves that she mocks at our anguish, and, perchance, chides it as foolish, humbly submit to her sneers, which are, indeed a very slight part of our ills, and try to persuade her to meditate on the fickleness of Fortune, who may yet change our estate and hers. Then shall we, in our joyous condition, be able to return her mock for mock and jeer for jeer. And shouldst thou discover anyone who cannot read thee with dry eyes, and who, because of her dolor for our do-

lor, blots thee with infinite tears, these tears hold close to thyself as being most holy; and, showing forth unto her my woful affliction and distress, humbly beseech her to pray for me to Him who, in the twinkling of an eye, flies over the whole world on his golden wings. So may he, being entreated by lips more worthy than mine, and being more benign to others than to me, be graciously pleased to relieve mine anguish, And for her, whoever she be, I now do pray that she may never be as wretched as I am, that the gods may ever be placable and benevolent in her regard, and that her loves may turn out propitious to her desires and may be lasting.

But if, perchance, changing from hand to hand among the amorous throngs of beautiful ladies, thou shouldst at last come to the dwelling of that most unfriendly lady who has plundered me of my rightful property, fly away incontinent from the accursed spot; show no part of thyself to her felonious eyes, so that, hearing of my tortures, she may not have a chance, the second time, to rejoice over the injury she has done me. But if it yet betide that, nathless everything, she has managed to gain possession of thee and has wished to read thee, then so conduct thyself that tears for my sorrows and not laughter shall come to her eyes, and that, her conscience stinging her, she may restore to me my lover. Oh, how blest would be the pity that had such a result as that! How fruitful would be thy labor then!

Fly the eyes of men, O little book! Yet, if haply thou be seen by them, say: "O ungrateful generation! O deriders of simple and innocent ladies!—it is not seemly that ye should even look at such pious things!" Shouldst thou, however, reach him who is the root of all my ills, rebuke him severely, and say: "O thou, harder than was ever oak, get thee away from here, and do not violate me with thy guilty hands! Thy broken faith is the occasion of all my pangs! Yet, if thou wishest to read me with a

humane mind, thou mayest do so. Perchance thou mayest recognize the crime thou hast committed against her who is always ready to pardon thee, if thou returnest to her. But if thou dost not care to do this, then it would not be fitting that thou shouldst behold the tears whereof thou art the sole occasion."

And if haply some lady should marvel that these my writings are so rude and unpolished, say to her that it is natural for such to be the case, inasmuch as ornate speech can come only from minds undisturbed and from those whose lives are serene and tranquil. Thou wilt further tell her that she should rather marvel that there should be so little roughness and confusion in a work composed in such circumstances.

Thou canst now proceed on thy way, safe as I believe from every ambush, and knowing that envy will not bite thee with her malignant tooth. But, if anyone more miserable than thee can be discovered (which I do not believe) and if he should bear thee envy, imagining that thou art happier than he, then allow thyself to be bitten. I do not know what part of thee can receive fresh hurt, inasmuch as I behold all parts of thee torn and lacerated by Fortune. Therefore he cannot injure thee much, or hurl thee from a high place to a low one, since thou art now as low as thou well canst be. And, seeing that Fortune has not only prostrated us in the dust, but has also sought to bury us under the earth, we have grown so accustomed to long-enduring disasters that with the same shoulders with which we have supported, and support, greater burdens, we shall support lesser ones; and therefore let her come when she wishes.

Live, then; for of life no one can deprive thee. Live as an eternal example to the happy and to the wretched of the anguish of thy mistress.

*Here endeth the book called Elegy of the noble lady, Madonna Fiammetta, sent by her to all ladies in love*

**P O E M S**  
**BY**  
**MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI**  
**TRANSLATED BY JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS**





## INTRODUCTION

**I**F Michelangelo Buonarroti was not the most gifted man known to history, at least it would be difficult to disprove his claim to that distinction.

He was a sculptor, a painter, an architect, a poet and an engineer, and was eminent in all. He was born in the castle of Caprese, Tuscany, March 6, 1475. His father was Governor of Caprese and Chiusi. The boy was sent to school; but he took more interest in drawing than in study, and when his gift for art became apparent, his father, in 1488, placed him as a pupil with Ghirlandaio for three years. Lorenzo de' Medici, who established a garden for the use of artists in Florence, observed the boy's love for sculpture and became his patron. At this time, and in the few years immediately following, Michelangelo produced several pieces of sculpture, notably a sleeping Cupid, for which he received a large price. He then went to Rome and executed several statues, and on returning to Florence used a block of marble, with which another sculptor had made a failure, to make his famous colossal statue of David. At this time, too, he began to paint, though he never ranked himself high in that art.

Pope Julius II summoned him to Rome to build a mausoleum, and kept him busy at various uncongenial tasks, including eight months as a superintendent in the marble-quarries of Carrara. The one notable work that he produced at this time was the famous statue of Moses. The Pope then required him to decorate the ceiling and walls of the Sistine Chapel, and he completed the pictures on the ceiling in twenty-two months. He was very reluctant to accept this commission, which he thought should have gone to Raphael; but the result is

one of the wonders of the world of art. The next Pope, Leo X, kept him at quarry work nine years, after which he was employed on the Medici Chapel, in Florence. In 1527-'30 he constructed the fortifications of Florence. He then painted several large and notable pictures—including "The Last Judgment," "The Conversion of Saint Paul," and "The Crucifixion of Saint Peter"—and in 1546 became architect of Saint Peter's. While he had this task in hand to the end of his life—seventeen years—he executed many other works, including the Farnese Palace, a bridge over the Tiber, and the great Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli. He completed the walls of Saint Peter's, and designed and modeled the dome, but this was not built until after his death, which took place in Rome, February 18, 1564. Two months later, Shakespeare was born. The sonnets written by these two men have a quality in common which the appreciative reader will easily recognize but will find it difficult to define. It is impossible to make a complete list of Michelangelo's works, as many sculptures are attributed to him on inconclusive evidence. Some of these are in France, some in England, and some in Germany.

Michelangelo was a student as well as an artist, was well read in the classics, and was fond of the poetry of Dante and Petrarch. His own poems are not numerous, but they rank high. He was a friend of Vittoria Colonna, who was seventeen years his junior, and some of his finest sonnets were written in her honor. His poems were collected and published by his nephew, who bore his name, and his biography has been written many times, notably by Harford, Symonds and Duppa in English.

With the exception of the last three, all the poems that follow are the translations of John Addington Symonds.

R. J.



**MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI READING A SONNET TO  
VITTORIA COLONNA**

57

*From a Painting by Herman Schneider*



## SONNETS TO VITTORIA COLONNA

### I

**S**EEKING at least to be not all unfit  
For thy sublime and boundless courtesy,  
My lowly thoughts at first were fain to try  
What they could yield for grace so infinite.  
But now I know my unassisted wit  
Is all too weak to make me soar so high;  
For pardon, lady, for this fault I cry,  
And wiser still I grow remembering it.  
Yea, well I see what folly 'twere to think  
That largess dropped from thee like dews from heaven  
Could e'er be paid by work so frail as mine!  
To nothingness my art and talent sink;  
He fails who from his mortal stores hath given  
A thousandfold to match one gift divine.

### II

WHEN that which is divine in us doth try  
To shape a face, both brain and hand unite  
To give, from a mere model frail and slight,  
Life to the stone by Art's free energy.  
Thus, too, before the painter dares to ply  
Paint-brush or canvas, he is wont to write  
Sketches on scraps of paper, and invite  
Wise minds to judge his figured history.  
So, born a model rude and mean to be  
Of my poor self, I gain a nobler birth,  
Lady, from you, you fountain of all worth!  
Each overplus and each deficiency  
You will make good What penance then is due  
For my fierce heat, chastened and taught by you?

## III

THE best of artists hath no thought to show  
Which the rough stone in its superfluous shell  
Doth not include: to break the marble spell  
Is all the hand that serves the brain can do.  
The ill I shun, the good I seek, even so  
In thee, fair lady, proud, ineffable  
Lies hidden: but the art I wield so well  
Works adverse to my wish, and lays me low.  
Therefore not love, nor thy transcendent face,  
Nor cruelty, nor fortune, nor disdain,  
Cause my mischance, nor fate, nor destiny;  
Since in thy heart thou carriest death and grace  
Enclosed together, and my worthless brain  
Can draw forth only death to feed on me.

## IV

HOW can that be, lady, which all men learn  
By long experience? Shapes that seem alive,  
Wrought in hard mountain marble, will survive  
Their maker, whom the years to dust return!  
Thus to effect cause yields. Art hath her turn,  
And triumphs over Nature. I, who strive  
With Sculpture, know this well; her wonders live  
In spite of Time and Death, those tyrants stern.  
So I can give long life to both of us  
In either way, by color or by stone,  
Making the semblance of thy face and mine.  
Centuries hence when both are buried, thus  
Thy beauty and my sadness shall be shown,  
And men shall say, "For her 'twas wise to pine."



## V

WHAT joy hath yon glad wreath of flowers that is  
    Around her golden hair so deftly twined,  
    Each blossom pressing forward from behind,  
As if to be the first her brows to kiss!  
The livelong day her gown hath perfect bliss,  
    That now reveals her breast, now seems to bind;  
    And that fair woven net of gold refined  
Rests on her cheek and throat in happiness!  
Yet still more blissful seems to me the band,  
    Gilt at the tips, so sweetly doth it ring  
    And clasp the bosom that it serves to lace:  
Yea, and the belt, to such as understand,  
    Bound round her waist, saith, "Here I'd ever cling!"  
    What would my arms do in that girdle's place?

## VI

WELL may these eyes of mine both near and far  
    Behold the beams that from thy beauty flow;  
    But, lady, feet must halt where sight may go:  
We see, but cannot climb to clasp a star.  
The pure ethereal soul surmounts that bar  
    Of flesh, and soars to where thy splendors glow,  
    Free through the eyes; while prisoned here below,  
Though fired with fervent love, our bodies are.  
Clogged with mortality and wingless, we  
    Cannot pursue an angel in her flight:  
    Only to gaze exhausts our utmost might.  
Yet, if but heaven like earth incline to thee.  
Let my whole body be one eye to see,  
    That not one part of me may miss thy sight!

## VII

IF only that thy beauties here may be  
Deathless through Time that rends the wreath he  
twined,  
I trust that Nature will collect and bind  
All those delights the slow years steal from thee  
And keep them for a birth more happily  
Born under better auspices, refined  
Into a heavenly form of nobler mind,  
And dowered with all thine angel purity.  
Ah me! and may heaven also keep my sighs,  
My scattered tears preserve and reunite,  
And give to him who loves that fair again!  
More happy he perchance shall move those eyes  
To mercy by the griefs my manhood blight,  
Nor lose the kindness that from me is ta'en.

## VIII

HE who ordained, when first the world began,  
Time, that was not before creation's hour,  
Divided it, and gave the sun's high power  
To rule the one, the moon the other span;  
Thence fate and changeeful chance and fortune's ban  
Did in one moment down on mortals shower.  
To me they portioned darkness for a dower;  
Dark hath my lot been since I was a man.  
Myself am ever mine own counterfeit;  
And as deep night grows still more dim and dun,  
So still of more misdoing must I rue.  
Meanwhile this solace to my soul is sweet,  
That my black night doth make more clear the sun  
Which at your birth was given to wait on you.

## IX

WHAT though long waiting wins more happiness  
Than petulant desire is wont to gain,  
My luck in latest age hath brought me pain,  
Thinking how brief must be an old man's bliss.  
Heaven, if it heed our lives, can hardly bless  
This fire of love when frosts are wont to reign:  
For so I love thee, lady, and my strain  
Of tears through age exceeds in tenderness.  
Yet peradventure though my day is done—  
Though nearly past the setting, mid thick cloud  
And frozen exhalations sinks my sun—  
If love to only mid-day be allowed,  
And I an old man in my evening burn,  
You, lady, still my night to noon may turn.

## X

IT must be right sometimes to entertain  
Chaste love with hope not over-credulous;  
Since if all human loves were impious,  
Unto what end did God the world ordain?  
If I love thee and bend beneath thy reign,  
'Tis for the sake of beauty glorious  
Which in thine eyes divine is stored for us,  
And drives all evil thought from its domain.  
That is not love whose tyranny we own  
In loveliness that every moment dies;  
Which, like the face it worships, fades away:  
True love is that which the pure heart hath known,  
Which alters not with time or death's decay,  
Yielding on earth earnest of Paradise.

## XI

A MAN within a woman, nay, a god,  
Speaks through her spoken word.  
I therefore, who have heard,  
Must suffer change and shall be mine no more.  
She lured me from the paths I whilom trod.  
Borne from my former state by her away,  
I stand aloof and mine own self deplore.  
Above all vain desire  
The beauty of her face doth lift my clay;  
All lesser loveliness seems charnel mire.  
O lady, who through fire  
And water ledest souls to joy eterne,  
Let me no more unto myself return.

## XII

I SAW no mortal beauty with these eyes  
When perfect peace in thy fair eyes I found;  
But far within, where all is holy ground,  
My soul felt Love, her comrade of the skies.  
For she was born with God in Paradise;  
Else should we still to transient love be bound;  
But, finding these so false, we pass beyond  
Unto the Love of loves that never dies.  
Nay, things that die cannot assuage the thirst  
Of souls undying; nor Eternity  
Serves Time, where all must fade that flourisheth.  
Sense is not love, but lawlessness accurst:  
This kills the soul, while our love lifts on high  
Our friends on earth—higher in heaven through  
death.

## ON VITTORIA COLONNA, AFTER HER DEATH

## I

WHEN my rude hammer to the stubborn stone  
Gives human shape—now that, now this, at will—  
Following his hand who wields and guides it still,  
It moves upon another's feet alone.

But that which dwells in heaven the world doth fill  
With beauty by pure motions of its own;

And since tools fashion tools that else were none,

Its life makes all that lives with living skill.

Now, for that every stroke excels the more

The higher at the forge it doth ascend,

Her soul that fashioned mine hath sought the skies;

Wherefore unfinished I must meet my end,

If God, the great artificer, denies

That aid which was unique on earth before.

## II

WHEN she who was the source of all my sighs

Fled from the world, herself, my straining sight,

Nature, who gave us that unique delight,

Was sunk in shame, and we had weeping eyes.

Yet shall not vauntful Death enjoy the prize,

This sun of suns which then he veiled in night;

For Love hath triumphed, lifting up her light

On earth and 'mid the saints in Paradise.

What though remorseless and unpiteous doom

Deemed that the music of her deeds would die,

And that her splendor would be sunk in gloom?

The poet's page exalts her to the sky

With life more living in the lifeless tomb,

And Death translates her soul to reign on high

## III

BLEST spirit, who with loving tenderness  
    Quickenest my heart, so old and near to die,  
    Who 'mid thy joys on me dost bend an eye,  
Though many nobler men around thee press—  
As thou wert erstwhile wont my sight to bless,  
    So to console my mind thou now dost fly  
    Hope therefore stills the pangs of memory,  
Which, coupled with desire, my soul distress.  
So finding in thee grace to plead for me,  
    Thy thoughts for me sunk in so sad a case,  
    He who now writes returns thee thanks for these.  
Lo! it were foul and monstrous usury  
    To send thee ugliest paintings in the place  
    Of thy fair spirit's living phantasies.

## ON DANTE ALIGHIERI

FROM heaven his spirit came, and, robed in clay,  
    The realms of justice and of mercy trod;  
    Then rose a living man to gaze on God,  
That he might make the truth as clear as day.  
For that pure star, which brightened with his ray  
    The undeserving nest where I was born,  
    The whole wide world would be a prize to scorn;  
None but his Maker can due guerdon pay.  
I speak of Dante, whose high work remains  
    Unknown, unhonored by that thankless brood  
    Who only to just men deny their wage.  
Were I but he! Born for like lingering pains,  
    Against his exile coupled with his good  
    I'd gladly change the world's best heritage!

## TO TOMMASO CAVALIERI

## I

WHY should I seek to ease intense desire  
With still more tears and windy words of grief,  
When heaven, or late or soon, sends no relief  
To souls whom Love hath robed around with fire?  
Why need my aching heart to death aspire  
When all must die? Nay, death beyond belief  
Unto these eyes would be both sweet and brief,  
Since in my sum of woes all joys expire.  
Therefore, because I cannot shun the blow  
I rather seek, say who must rule my breast,  
Gliding between her gladness and her woe?  
If only chains and bands can make me blest,  
No marvel if alone and bare I go  
An armèd knight's captive and slave confessed.

## II

WITH your fair eyes a charming light I see,  
For which my own blind eyes would peer in vain.  
Stayed by your feet, the burden I sustain  
Which my lame feet find all too strong for me;  
Wingless upon your pinions forth I fly;  
Heavenward your spirit stirreth me to strain;  
E'en as you will, I blush and blanch again.  
Freeze in the sun, burn 'neath a frosty sky.  
Your will includes and is the lord of mine;  
Life to my thoughts within your heart is given;  
My words begin to breathe upon your breath.  
Like to the moon am I, that cannot shine  
Alone; for lo! our eyes see naught in heaven  
Save what the living sun illumineth.

## NIGHT

O NIGHT, O sweet though somber span of time!  
All things find rest upon their journey's end.  
Whoso hath praised thee, well doth apprehend;  
And whoso honors thee hath wisdom's prime.  
Our cares thou canst to quietude sublime;  
For dews and darkness are of peace the friend.  
Often by thee in dreams upborne, I wend  
From earth to heaven, where yet I hope to climb.  
Thou shade of Death, through whom the soul at length  
Shuns pain and sadness hostile to the heart,  
Whom mourners find their last and sure relief!  
Thou dost restore our suffering flesh to strength,  
Driest our tears, assuagest every smart,  
Purging the spirits of the pure from grief.

## A DIALOGUE WITH LOVE

Michelangelo—

NAY, prithee tell me, Love, when I behold  
My lady, do mine eyes her beauty see  
In truth, or dwells that loveliness in me  
Which multiplies her grace a thousandfold?  
Thou needs must know; for thou with her of old  
Comest to stir my soul's tranquillity.  
Yet would I not seek one sigh less, or be  
By loss of that loved flame more simply cold.

Love—

The beauty thou discernest all is hers;  
But grows in radiance as it soars on high  
Through mortal eyes until the soul above:  
'Tis there transfigured; for the soul confers  
On what she holds her own divinity;  
And this transfigured beauty wins thy love.



## VAIN LOVE

GIVE back unto mine eyes, ye fount and rill,  
Those streams, not yours, that are so full and strong,  
That swell your springs, and roll your waves along  
With force unwonted in your native hill!  
And thou, dense air, weighed with my sighs so chill,  
That bidest heaven's own light thick mists among,  
Give back those sighs to my sad heart, nor wrong  
My visual ray with thy dark face of ill!  
Let earth give back the footprints that I wore,  
That the bare grass I spoiled may sprout again;  
And Echo, now grown deaf, my cries return!  
Loved eyes, unto mine eyes those looks restore,  
And let me woo another not in vain,  
Since how to please thee I shall never learn!

## TO LUIGI DEL RICCIO

*Who had nursed Michelangelo through a dangerous illness*

IT happens that the sweet unfathomed sea  
Of seeming courtesy sometimes doth hide  
Offense to life and honor. This descried,  
I hold less dear the health restored to me  
He who lends wings of hope, while secretly  
He spreads a traitorous snare by the wayside,  
Hath dulled the flame of love and mortified  
Friendship where friendship burns most fervently.  
Keep then, my dear Luigi, clear and pure  
That ancient love to which my life I owe,  
That neither wind nor storm its calm may mar.  
For wrath and pain our gratitude obscure,  
And, if the truest truth of love I know,  
One pang outweighs a thousand pleasures far.

## LOVE AND AGE

BRING back the time when glad desire ran free  
With bit and rein too loose to curb his flight,  
The tears and flames that in one breast unite,  
If thou art fain once more to conquer me!  
Bring back those journeys ta'en so toilsomely,  
So toilsome-slow to him whose hairs are white!  
Give back the buried face once angel-bright,  
That taxed all Nature's art and industry.  
O Love! an old man finds it hard to chase  
Thy flying pinions! Thou hast left thy nest;  
Nor is my heart as light as heretofore.  
Put thy gold arrows to the string once more:  
Then if Death hear my prayer and grant me grace,  
My grief I shall forget, again made blest.

## VANITY OF VANITIES

THE fables of the world have filched away  
The time I had for thinking upon God;  
His grace lies buried 'neath oblivion's sod,  
Whence springs an evil crop of sins away.  
What makes another wise, leads me astray,  
Slow to discern the bad path I have trod:  
Hope fades, but still desire ascends that God  
May free me from self-love, my sure decay.  
Shorten half-way my road to heaven from earth!  
Dear Lord, I cannot even half-way rise  
Unless Thou help me on this pilgrimage.  
Teach me to hate the world so little worth,  
And all the lovely things I clasp and prize,  
That endless life, ere death, may be my wage.

## WAITING FOR DEATH

MY death must come; but when, I do not know:  
Life's short, and little life remains for me:  
Fain would my flesh abide; my soul would flee  
Heavenward, for still she calls on me to go.  
Blind is the world; and evil here below  
O'erwhelms and triumphs over honesty:  
The light is quenched; quenched too is bravery:  
Lies reign, and truth has ceased her face to show.  
When will that day dawn, Lord, for which he waits  
Who trusts in Thee? Lo, this prolonged delay  
Destroys all hope and robs the soul of life.  
Why streams the light from those celestial gates  
If death prevent the day of grace, and stay  
Our souls forever in the toils of strife?

## REGRETS

AH me, ah me! how have I been betrayed  
By my swift-flitting years, and by the glass,  
Which yet tells truth to those who firmly gaze!  
Thus happens it when one too long delays,  
As I have done, nor feel time fleet and fade.  
One morn he finds himself grown old, alas!  
To gird my loins, repent, my path repass,  
Sound counsel take, I cannot, now death's near;  
Foe to myself, each tear  
Each sigh, is idly to the light wind sent,  
For there's no loss to equal time ill-spent.

Ah me, ah me! I wander telling o'er  
Past years, and yet in all I cannot view  
One day that might be rightly reckoned mine.  
Delusive hopes and vain desires entwine  
My soul that loves, weeps, burns, and sighs full sore.

Too well I know and prove that this is true,  
Since of man's passions none to me are new.  
Far from the truth my steps have gone astray,  
In peril now I stay,  
For, lo! the brief span of my life is o'er.  
Yet, were it lengthened, I should love once more.

Ah me! I wander tired, and know not whither.  
I fear to sight my goal, the years gone by  
Point it too plain; nor will closed eyes avail.  
Now Time hath changed and gnawed this mortal veil,  
Death and the soul in conflict strive together  
About my future fate that looms so nigh.  
Unless my judgment greatly goes awry,  
Which God in mercy grant, I can but see  
Eternal penalty  
Waiting my wasted will, my misused mind,  
And know not, Lord, where health and hope to find.

### AN OLD MAN'S PRAYER

OFTTIMES my great desire doth flatter me  
With hope on earth yet many years to stay;  
Still Death, the more I love it, day by day  
Takes from the life I love so tenderly.  
What better time for that dread change could be,  
If in our griefs alone to God we pray?  
O, lead me, Lord, oh, lead me far away  
From every thought that lures my soul from Thee!  
Yea, if at any hour, through grace of Thine,  
The fervent zeal of love and faith that cheer  
And fortify the soul, my heart assail,  
Since nought achieve these mortal powers of mine,  
Plant, like a saint in heaven, that virtue here;  
For, lacking Thee, all good must faint and fail.

## THE MIGHT OF ONE FAIR FACE

THE might of one fair face sublimed my love,  
For it hath weaned my heart from low desires;  
Nor death I need, nor purgatorial fires:  
Thy beauty, antepast of joys above,  
Instructs me in the bliss that saints approve;  
For oh! how good, how beautiful, must be  
The God that made so good a thing as thee,  
So fair an image of the heavenly Dove!  
Forgive me if I cannot turn away  
From those sweet eyes that are my earthly heaven,  
For they are guiding stars, benignly given  
To tempt my footsteps to the upward way;  
And if I dwell too fondly in thy sight,  
I live and love in God's peculiar light.

—Translated by Hartley Coleridge.

## LOVE'S JUSTIFICATION

YES! hope may with my strong desire keep pace,  
And I be undeluded, unbetrayed;  
For if of our affections none find grace  
In sight of Heaven, then wherefore hath God made  
The world that we inhabit? Better plea  
Love cannot have, than that in loving thee  
Glory to that eternal peace is paid,  
Who such divinity to thee imparts  
As hallows and makes pure all gentle hearts.  
His hope is treacherous only whose love dies  
With beauty, which is varying every hour;  
But, in chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power  
Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower,  
That breathes on earth the air of paradise.

—Translated by William Wordsworth.

## TO THE SUPREME BEING

THE prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,  
If Thou the spirit give by which I pray:  
My unassisted heart is barren clay,  
Which of its native self can nothing feed:  
Of good and pious works Thou art the seed,  
Which quickens only where Thou say'st it may;  
Unless Thou show to us Thine own true way,  
No man can find it: Father, thou must lead.  
Do Thou, then, breathe those thoughts into my mind  
By which such virtue may in me be bred  
That in Thy holy footsteps I may tread;  
The fetters of my tongue do Thou unbind,  
That I may have the power to sing of Thee,  
And sound Thy praises everlastingly.

—*Translated by William Wordsworth.*

